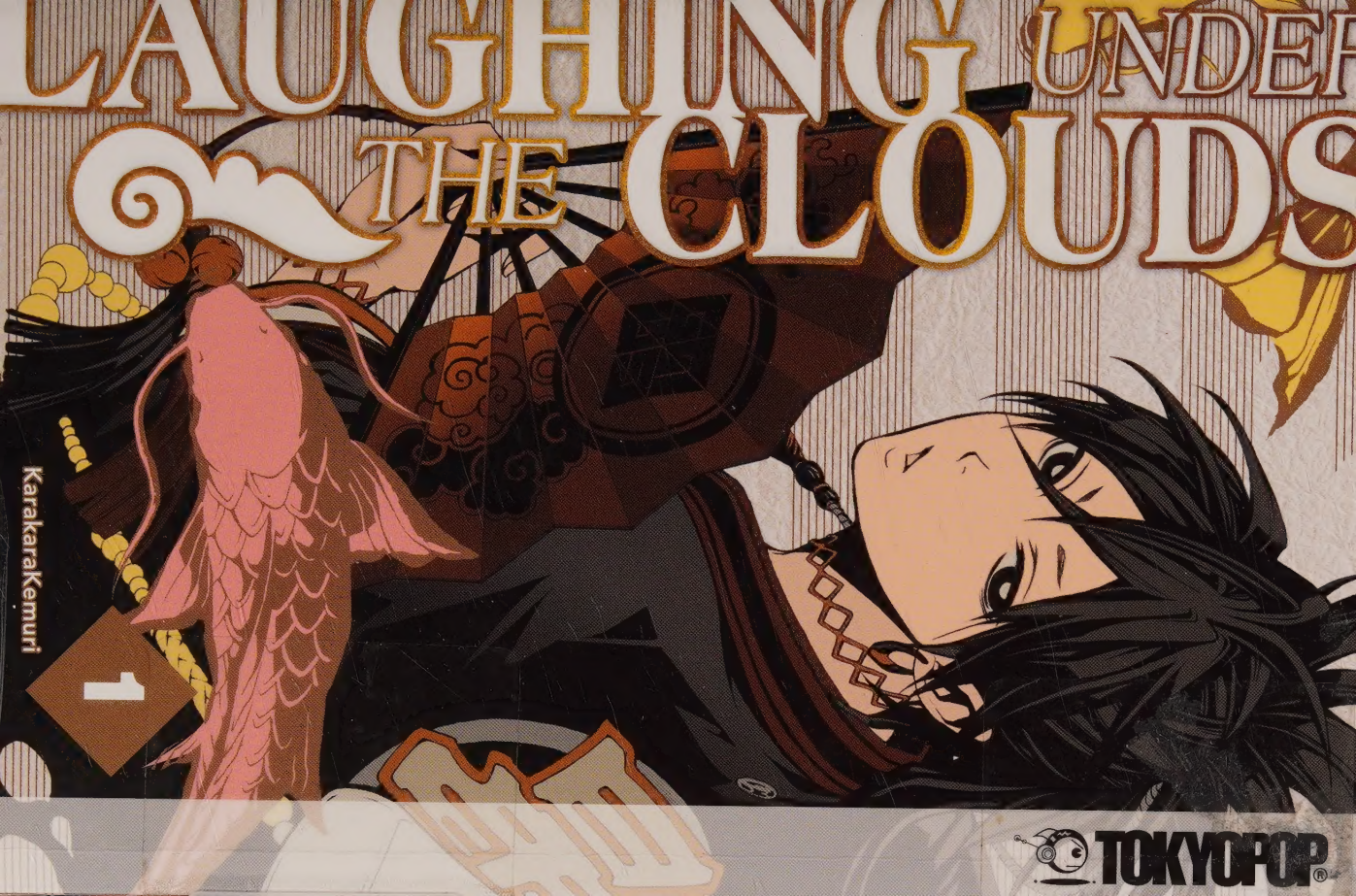
LAUGHING UNDER THE CLOUDS

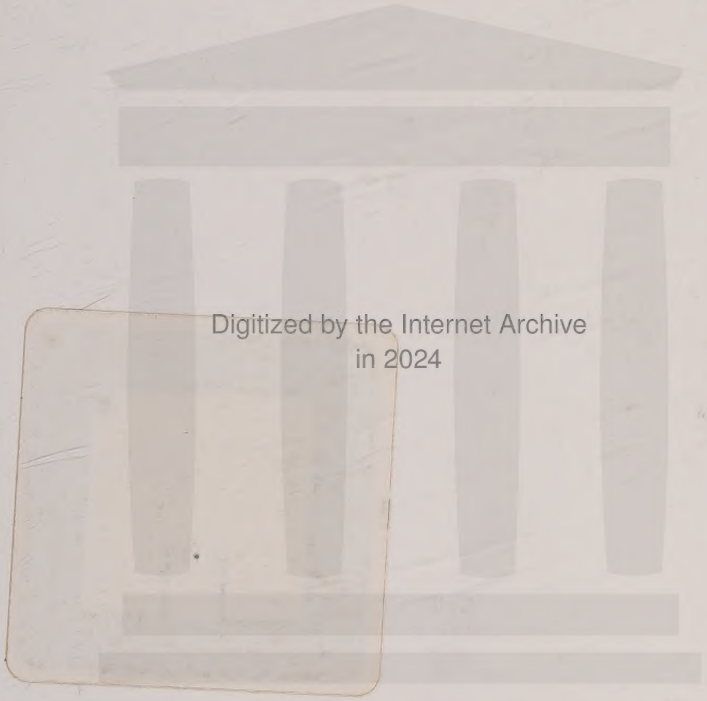


KarakaraKemuri

1

TOKYOPOP®


1878 (11TH YEAR OF THE MEIJI ERA)
CRASH
THEY GOT AWAY!
WHERE DID THEY GO?!
OH, SHIT! ARE YOU OKAY?!
—!


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LAUGHING UNDER THE CLOUDS
KARAKARAKEMURI
1



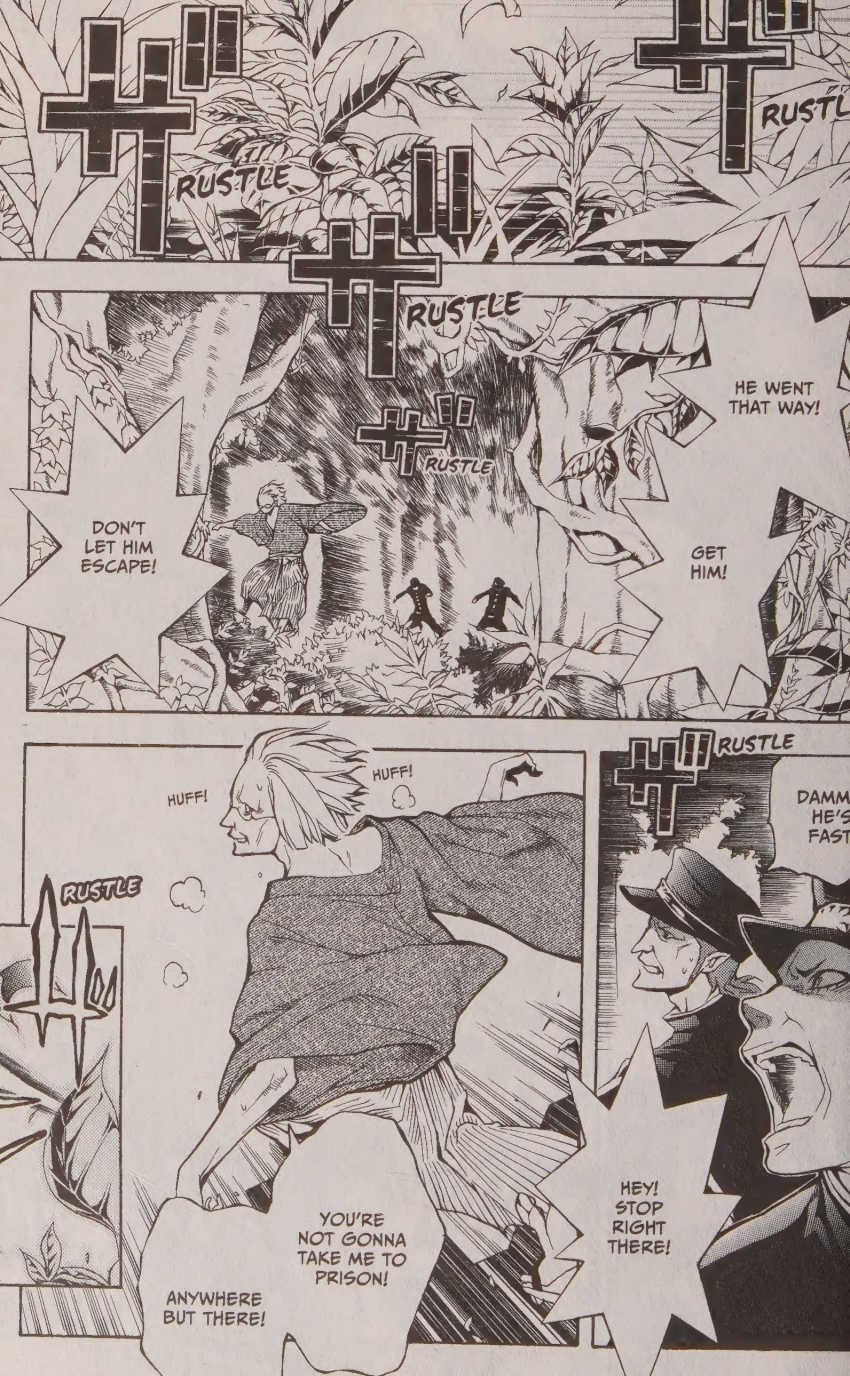
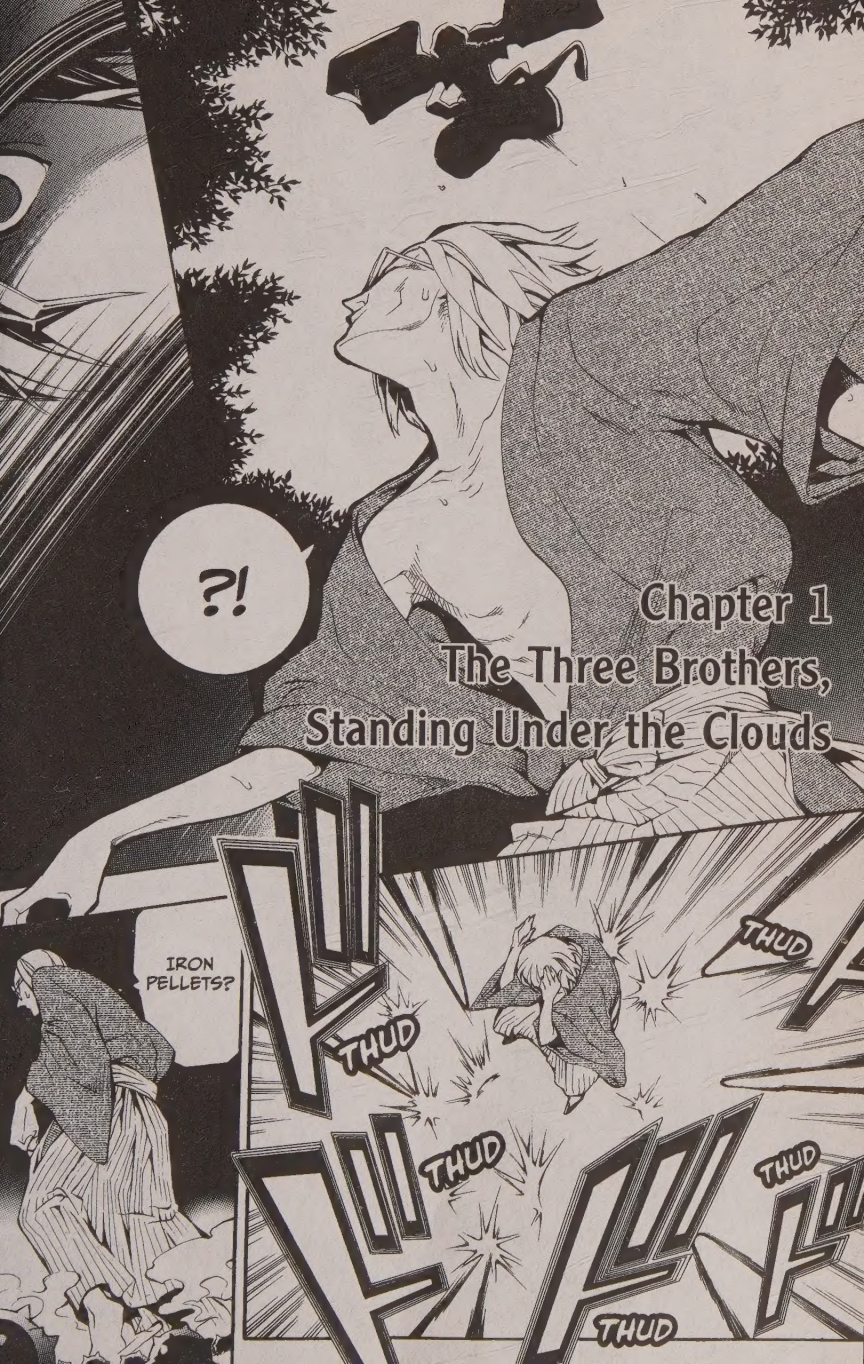
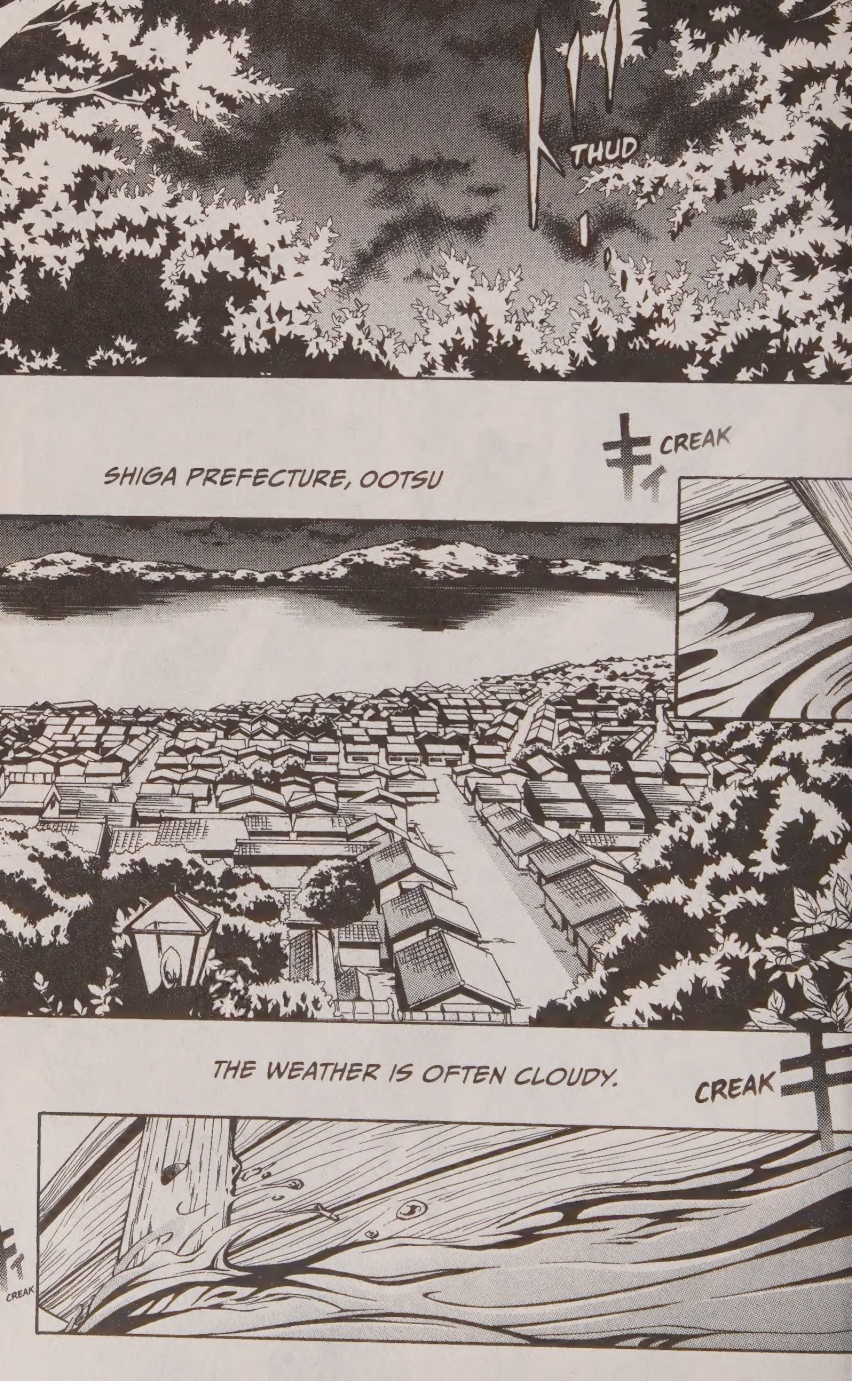

RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTL
HE WENT THAT WAY!
DON'T LET HIM ESCAPE!
GET HIM!
HUFF!
HUFF!
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
DAMM HE'S FAST
HEY! STOP RIGHT THERE!
YOU'RE NOT GONNA TAKE ME TO PRISON!
ANYWHERE BUT THERE!

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THUD
THINK YOU'RE GETTING AWAY?
EE
I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW...
OUT OF MY WAAAAAAY!

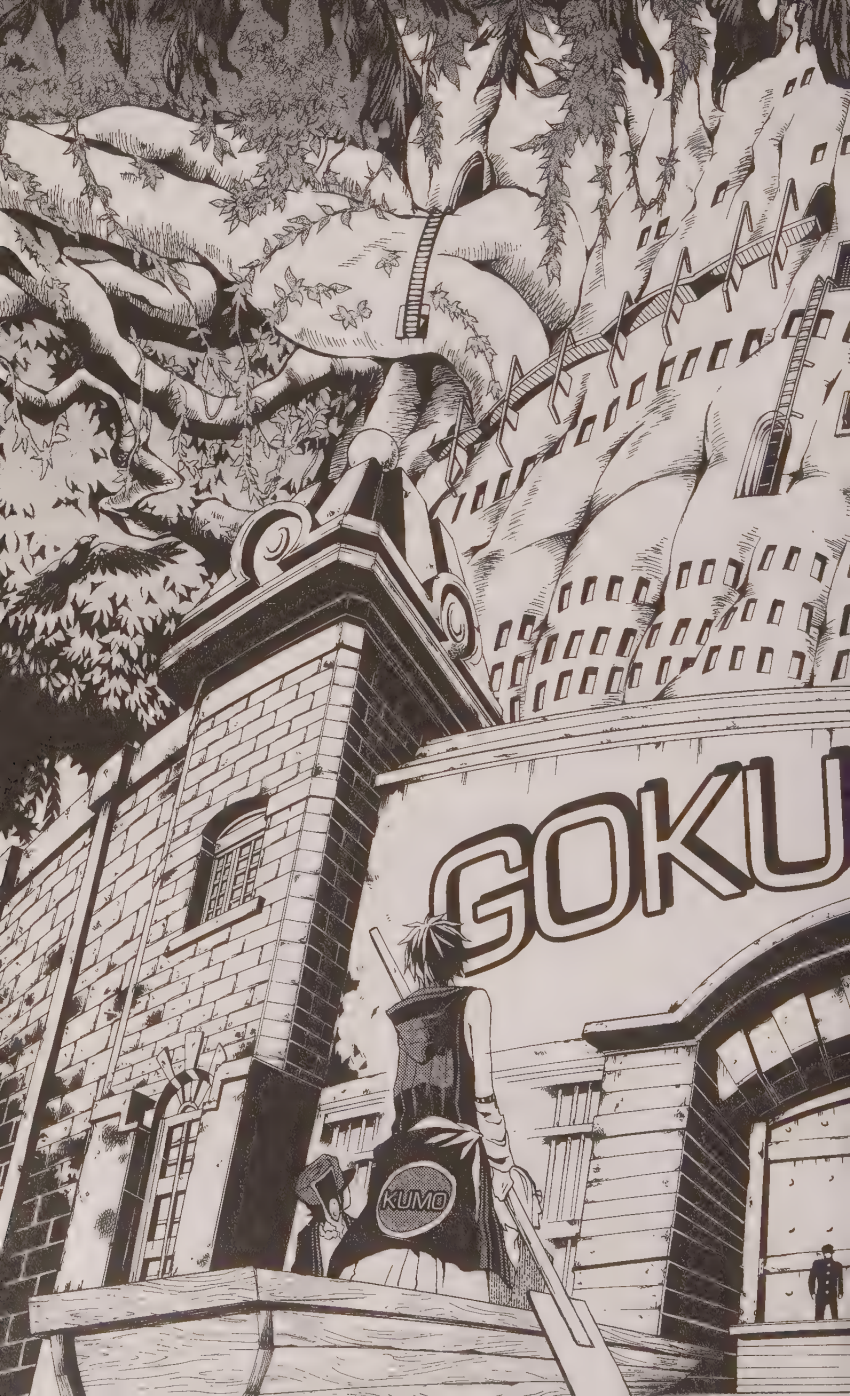

?!
Chapter 1
The Three Brothers,
Standing Under the Clouds
IRON PELLETS?
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD

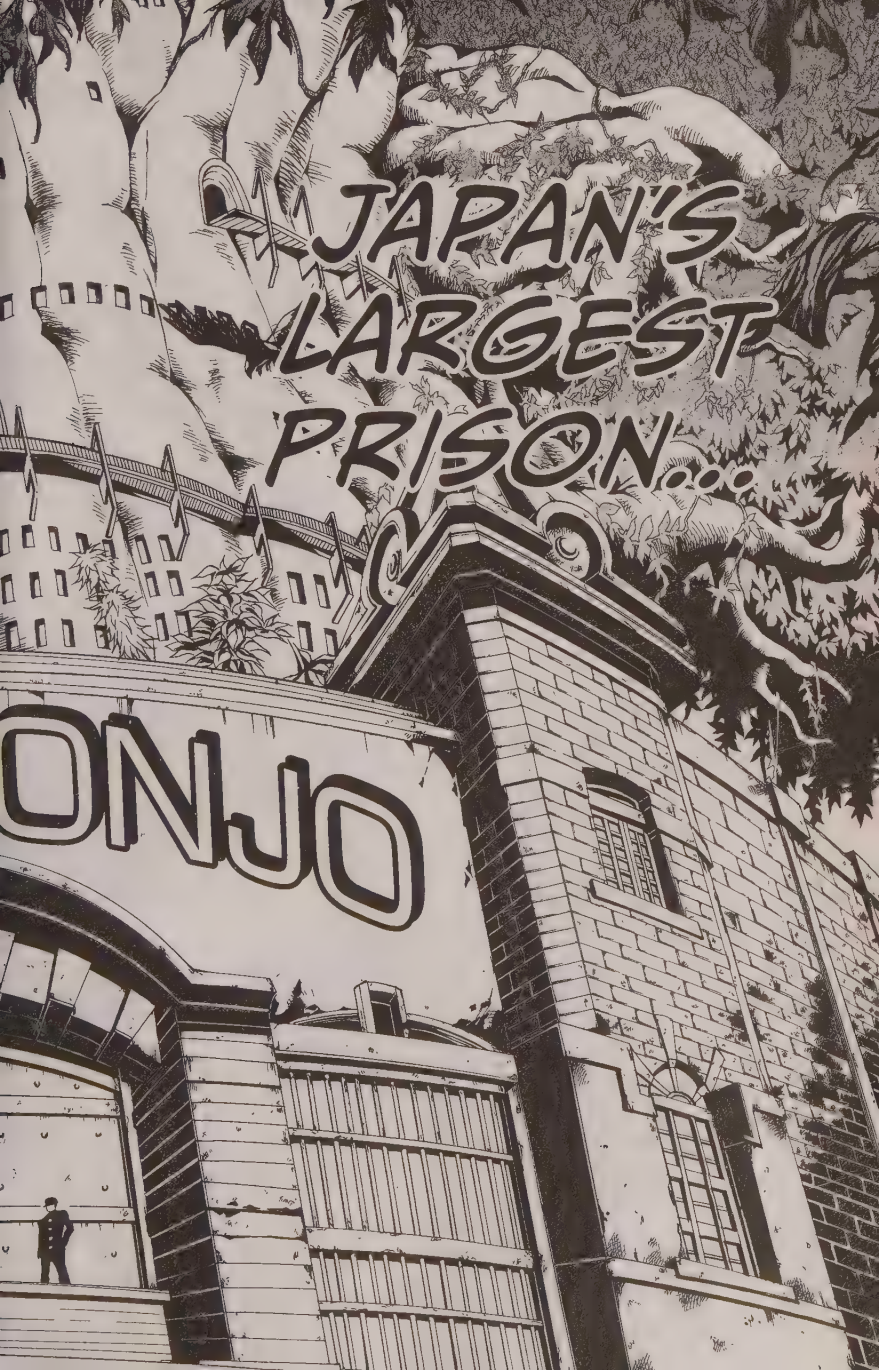

THUD
CREAK
SHIGA PREFECTURE, OOTSU
THE WEATHER IS OFTEN CLOUDY.
CREAK
CREAK


AROUND HERE, I MAKE THE RULES.

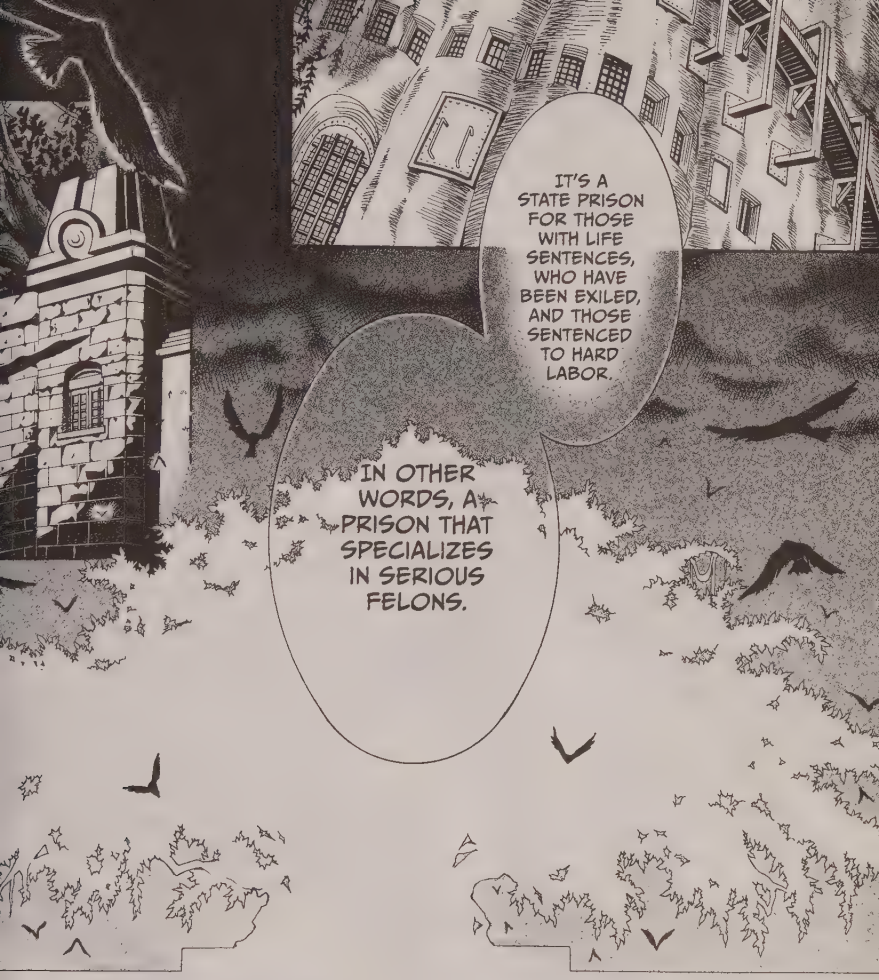

CRIMINALS SHOULDN'T RUN AWAY.
IT ONLY MAKES YOUR CRIMES HEAVIER.
ARE YOU TWO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS?!
NOPE. NOTHING NEARLY AS IMPRESSIVE.
CREAK
WE'RE JUST FERRYMEN FOR LAKE BIWA.
AH!
AAH!
AH!
HERE WE ARE. STARTING TODAY, THIS IS YOUR HOME.

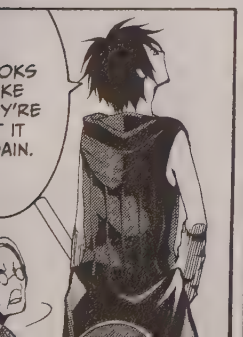
HEY, HE'S AWAKE! G'MORNING!
LEAP
YOU—!
YOU PUNCHED AN OFFICER WHILE YOU WERE BEING TRANSPORTED AND THEN MADE A RUN FOR IT,


GOKU
KUMO


JAPAN'S LARGEST PRISON...
ONJO


SUFFER PLENTY TO ATONE FOR YOUR SINS.
GYAAAAAAAH!
THAT'S THE PUNISHMENT BLOCK.
DOZENS OF PRISONERS ARE ADMITTED THERE EVERY DAY.
DON'T WORRY, NO ONE'S ACTUALLY DIED IN THERE.
FLAP
DON'T EVEN DREAM OF ESCAPING.
TREMBLE


IT'S A STATE PRISON FOR THOSE WITH LIFE SENTENCES, WHO HAVE BEEN EXILED, AND THOSE SENTENCED TO HARD LABOR.
IN OTHER WORDS, A PRISON THAT SPECIALIZES IN SERIOUS FELONS.


OKS
KE
Y'RE
T IT
AIN.


GHAAAAAAH!
THADUMP

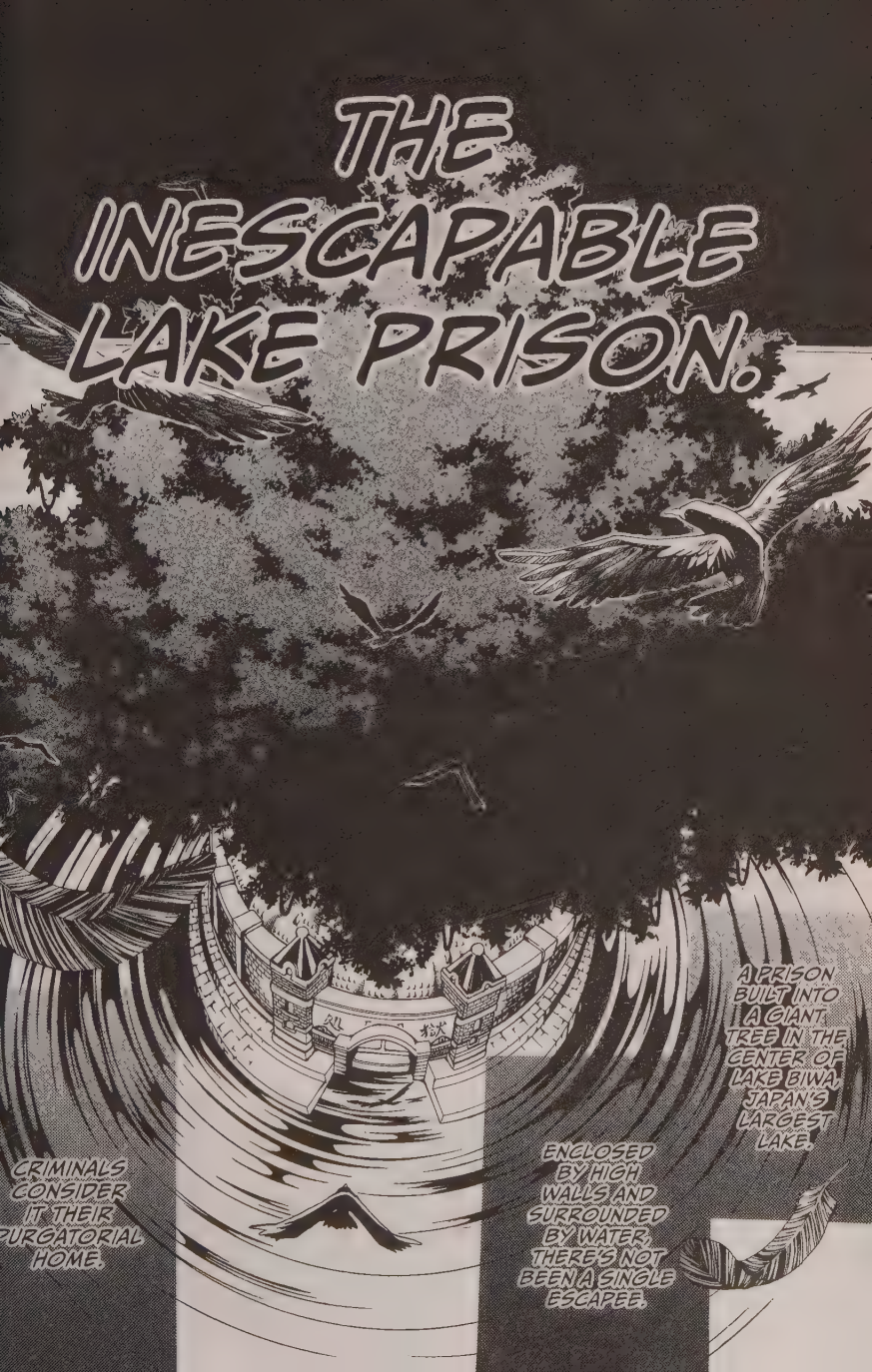

P-PLEASE! LET ME GO! ANYWHERE BUT HERE!
DON'T TAKE ME THERE!

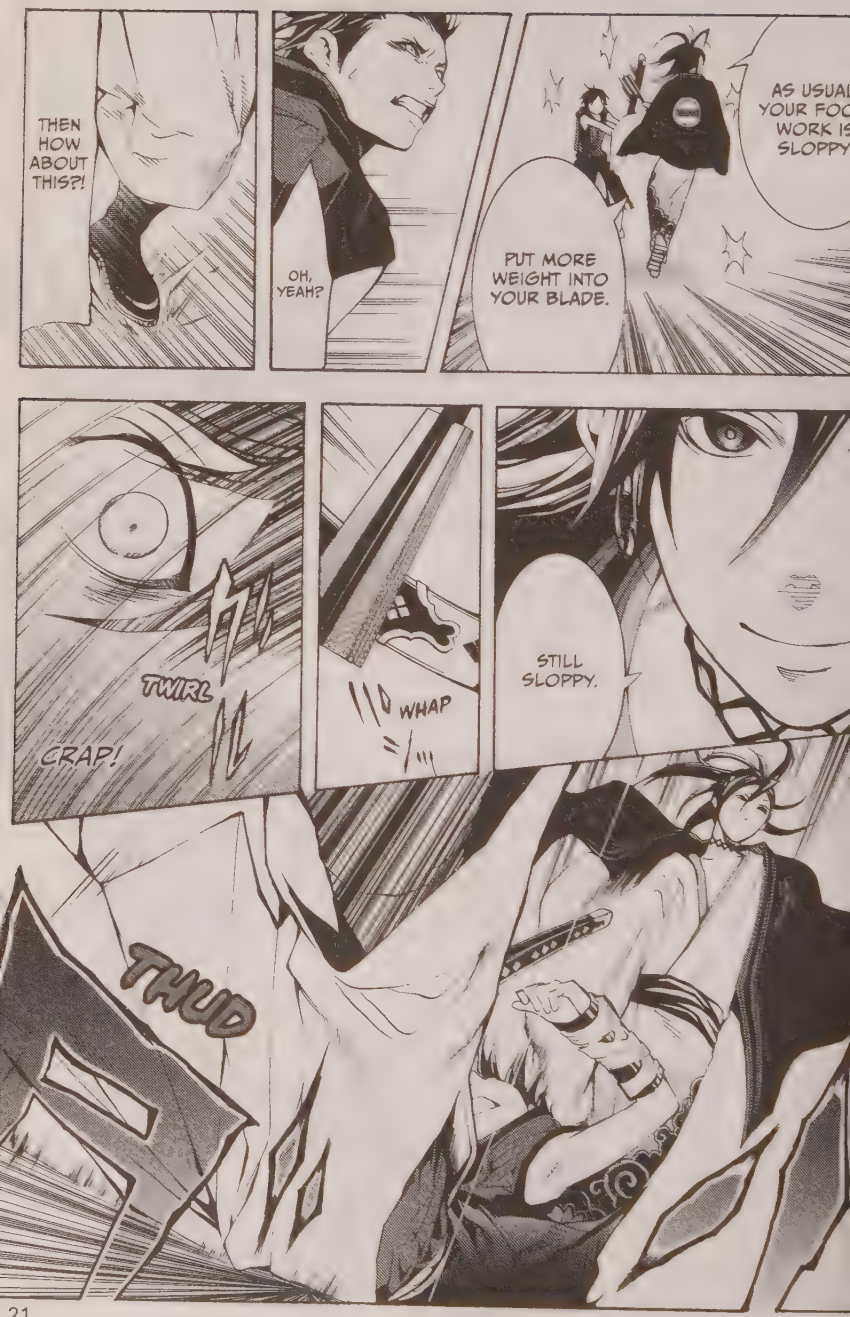


IT WAS THEN THAT THE GOVERNMENT ENACTED A NEW POLICY.


21ST YEAR OF THE MEIJI ERA
THE EDO ERA HAS ENDED AND THE CURTAIN RISES ON THE JAPAN'S AGE OF CIVILIZATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT.
AS WESTERNIZATION PROGRESSES, JAPAN TAKES ITS FIRST HUGE STEP TOWARDS THE MODERN AGE WITH GLITTERING CLOTHES AND ARCHITECTURE.
A BAN WAS PLACED ON SWORD-CARRYING. THE SAMURAI WERE ALL BUT ELIMINATED AND THE STREETS BUSTLED WITH ACTIVITY.


IMAGINE THAT, BUILDING A PRISON IN THE CENTER OF LAKE BIWA. THE GOVERNMENT SURE THOUGHT UP SOMETHING WILD.
JUST WISH OUR FAMILY, THE KUMO, WHO SERVE AS FERRYMEN FOR THE PRISON WOULD GET A LITTLE RECOGNITION.
TWEET
IF ONLY THEY'D RAISE OUR SALARY A BIT. IT'S TOUGH GETTING BY.
TWEET
KUMO
CLACK

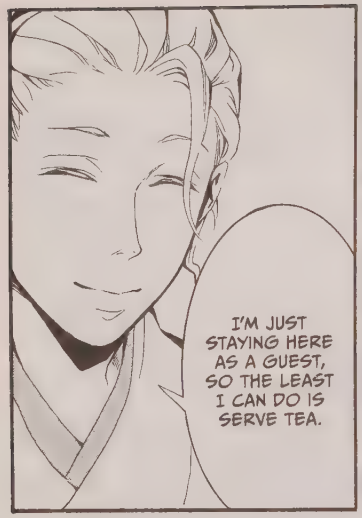

THE INESCAPABLE LAKE PRISON.
A PRISON BUILT INTO A GIANT TREE IN THE CENTER OF LAKE BIWA, JAPAN'S LARGEST LAKE.
ENCLOSED BY HIGH WALLS AND SURROUNDED BY WATER, THERE'S NOT BEEN A SINGLE ESCAPEE.
CRIMINALS CONSIDER IT THEIR PURGATORIAL HOME.

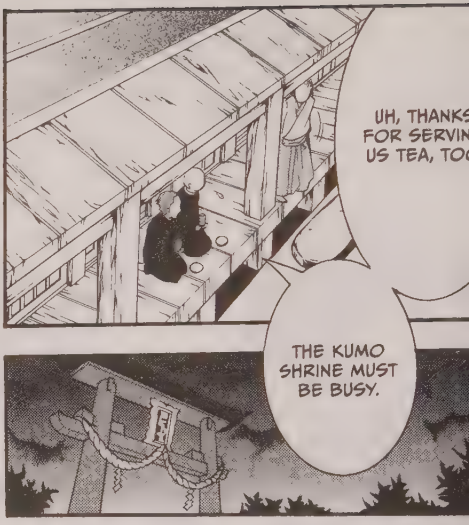

THEN HOW ABOUT THIS?!
OH, YEAH?
PUT MORE WEIGHT INTO YOUR BLADE.
AS USUAL YOUR FOC WORK IS SLOPPY
STILL SLOPPY.
WHAP
TWIRL
CRAP!
THUD

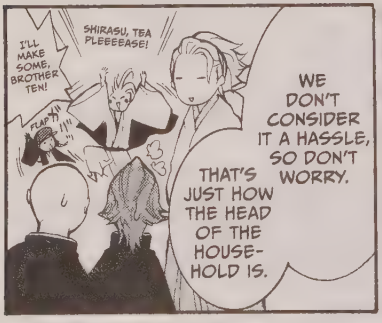

THWACK
WHACK
BASH
CLACK
SHUDDUP!
ARE YOU GOING EASY ON ME BECAUSE THIS IS PRACTICE?
WHAT'S THE MATTER? YOU'RE HOLDING BACK.

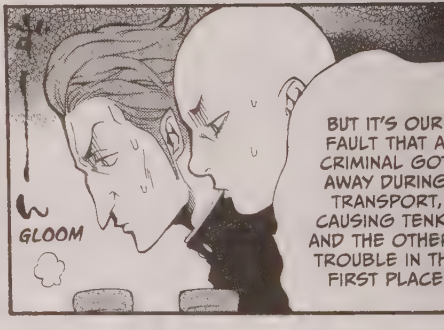

...DAMN IT.
YO
SWO
MAN
IS
WE
HOW DO YOU EXPECT TO TAKE ON EVEN A SINGLE CRIMINAL WITH IT?
THIRD SON CHUTARO
ME TOO! ME TOO! LET ME PRACTICE, TOO!
BROTHE
TEN!
OH MY!
YOU'RE SO COOL!
AND AWESOME!
AND YOU STINK.
GO ON! GO OOOON!
HA!
HA
HA
BWA
HA
AND HAVE HAIR LIKE A CRAB!
AND SMART!
BROTHER TEN, YOU'RE SO STRONG!
VERY
THEN
ONLY
PRAIS

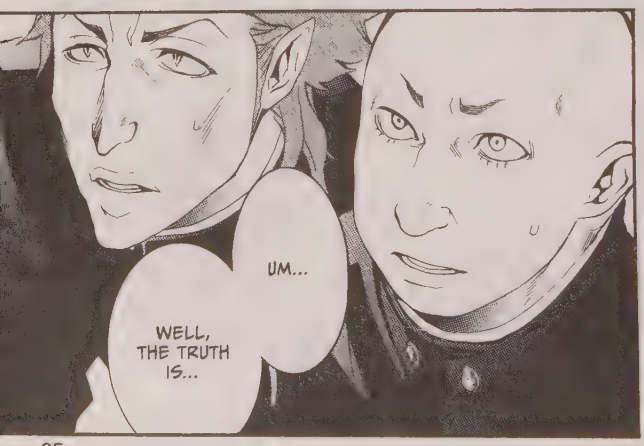

HA!
HA!
HA!
BWA HA HA!
KUMO FAMILY OF THE KUMO SHRINE ELDEST SON
TENKA
YOU'VE STILL GOT A COUPLE HUNDRED MILLION YEARS TO GO BEFORE YOU'RE IN ANY POSITION TO BEAT YOUR BIG BROTHER!
UGH...
WHAP
!!!
WEAK, WEAK, WEAK!
YOU'RE ONLY CAPABLE OF WAVING YOUR SWORD AROUND LIKE A MADMAN!
BWA HA HA HA HA!
-!
SECOND SON
SORAMARU
BUT THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE PRACTICE!

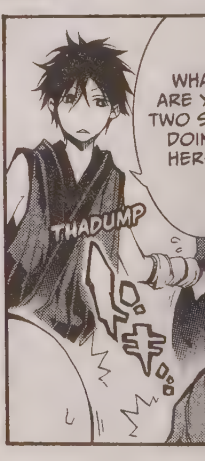

I'M JUST STAYING HERE AS A GUEST, SO THE LEAST I CAN DO IS SERVE TEA.

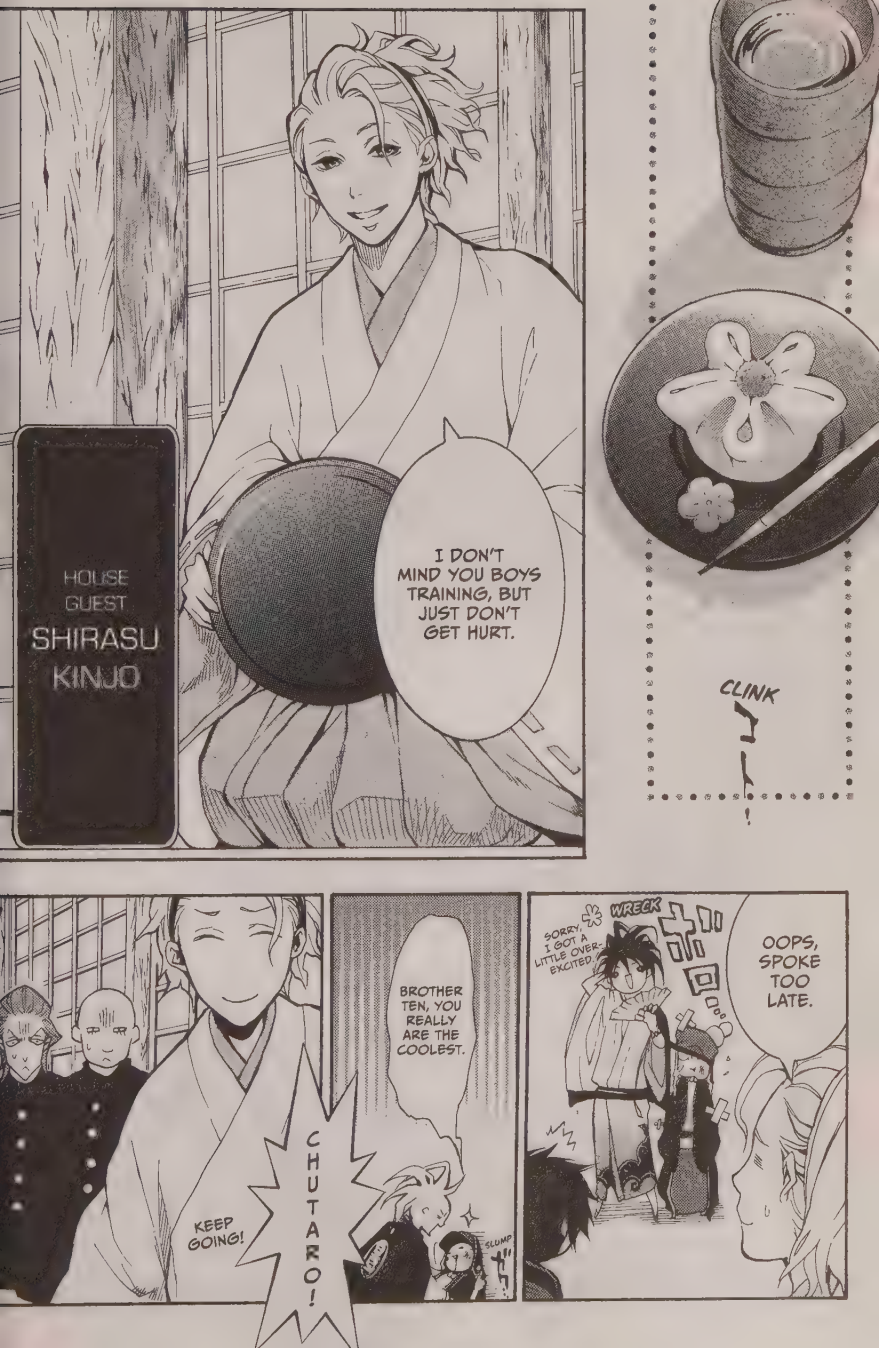

UH, THANKS FOR SERVIN US TEA, TOO
THE KUMO SHRINE MUST BE BUSY.


SHIRASU, TEA PLEEEEASE!
I'LL MAKE SOME, BROTHER TEN!
FLAP!!
WE DON'T CONSIDER IT A HASSLE, SO DON'T WORRY.
THAT'S JUST HOW THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE-HOLD IS.


GLOOM
BUT IT'S OUR FAULT THAT A CRIMINAL GOT AWAY DURING TRANSPORT, CAUSING TENK AND THE OTHE TROUBLE IN TH FIRST PLACE


UM...
WELL, THE TRUTH IS...


WHA ARE Y TWO S DOIN HER
THADUMP


HOUSE GUEST
SHIRASU KINJO
I DON'T MIND YOU BOYS TRAINING, BUT JUST DON'T GET HURT.
CLINK
カチャ
OOPS, SPOKE TOO LATE.
WRECK
ガロ
SORRY, I GOT A LITTLE OVER-EXCITED.
BROTHER TEN, YOU REALLY ARE THE COOLEST.
SLUMP
ガク
CHUTARO!
KEEP GOING!

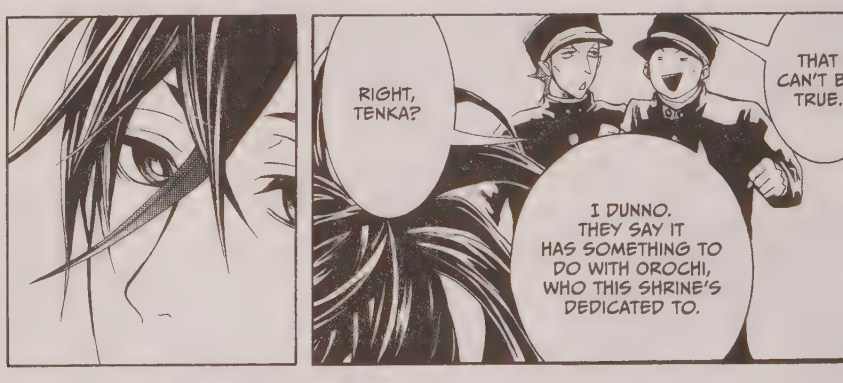

GOT IT!
THERE'S NOTHING ELSE WE CAN DO. LET'S GO, CHUTARO.
QUIT YELLING!
IT'S EMBARRASSING!
SLAM
SLAM
SLAM
I WA
TO LIV
LIFE
LUXUR
THIS JOB ISN'T FOR YOU.
RATTLE
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
SWAP
I BROUGHT YOU ON THE LAST ONE.
LEAVE THIS ONE TO YOUR BIG BROTHER.


WHAT DO YOU MEAN THERE'S STILL MORE CRIMINALS ON THE LOOSE?!
THEY MANAGED TO SLIP THROUGH THE CRACKS AND ESCAPE.
YES. WE WEREN'T JUST TRANSPORTING ONE.
WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SO EARLIER? YOU'RE POLICE OFFICERS, AREN'T YOU?
SFF
I SEE. THEY PROBABLY DIDN'T WANT THEIR SUPERIOR FINDING OUT.
MONEY
BROTHER!
YOUR SECRET'S SAFE WITH ME, SO THROW IN A LITTLE EXTRA, IN GOOD FAITH.
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL? THIS WORK ISN'T ENOUGH TO PAY THE BILLS.
THAT'S ROTHER TEN FOR A! ALWAYS THINKING ABOUT US.
WAH!
WAH!
WAH!
WAH!
WAH!
BUT BLACK-MAIL IS DIFFERENT!


I DON'T NEED YOU SLOWING ME DOWN.

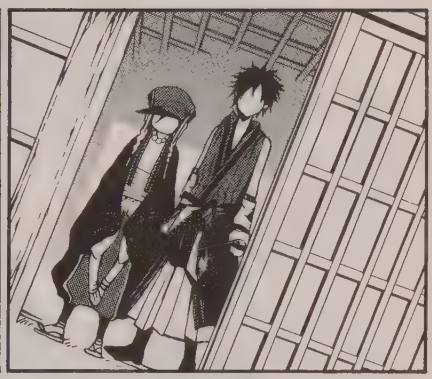

LIKE YOU'RE SO COOL!
PFFT!
WHY'RE YOU ACTING SO BIG AND TOUGH, TALKING ABOUT DUTY?
!!
WHOMP
I'M STILL THE SECOND SON OF THE KUMO FAMILY.
I'VE GOT A DUTY TO DELIVER CRIMINALS TO GOKUMONJO.
I WANNA HELP TOO, BROTHER TEN!
W-WHAT ABOUT ME?!
BROTHER!
GIVE IT A REST ALREADY.
NONSENSE. NOW BE A GOOD BOY AND STAY IN THE HOUSE.
YOU'VE GOT PLENTY TO DO.
PFFT!


THAT CLOUDS COVER THIS LAND ONCE EVERY 300 YEARS... AND IT'S AN OMEN OF BAD THINGS TO COME.

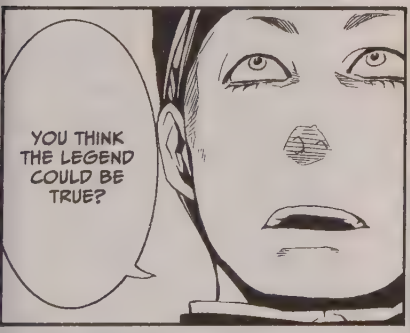

RIGHT, TENKA?
I DUNNO. THEY SAY IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH OROCHI, WHO THIS SHRINE'S DEDICATED TO.
THAT CAN'T B TRUE.

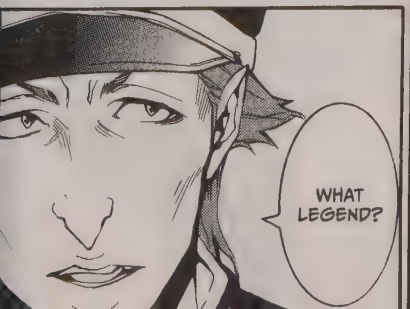

YOU'RE STILL GOING ON ABOUT THAT?
HUH?!
YOU TWO PAY UP LATER.






ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS? THEY WERE GLARING DAGGERS AT YOU.
NAAH, THEY'RE JUST WORRIED ABOUT DINNER.
I HOPE I DON'T HAVE TO CUT BACK ON IT.

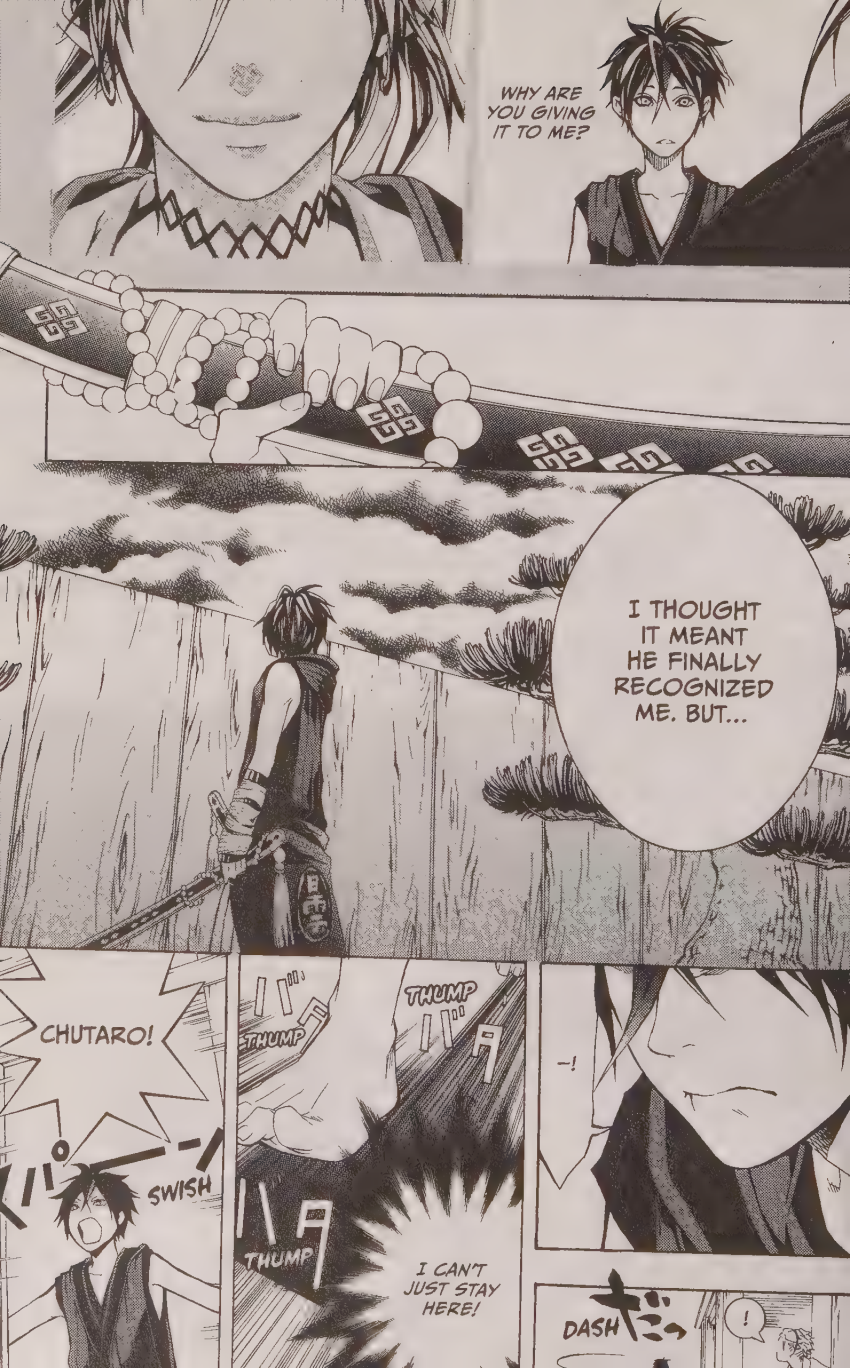

YOU THINK THE LEGEND COULD BE TRUE?


WHAT LEGEND?

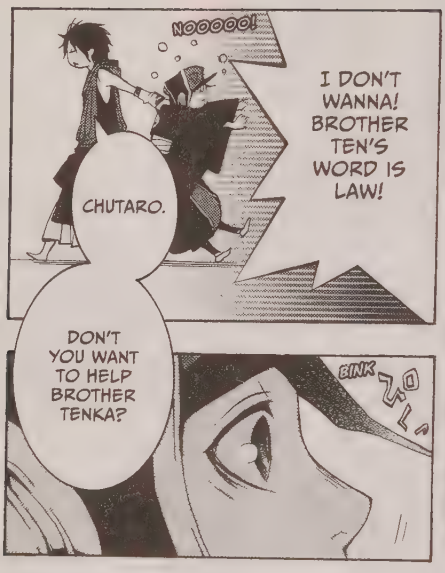

WOW. SHIGA REALLY IS ALWAYS CLOUDY, ISN'T IT.
I WAS THINKING THE SAME THING. WONDER WHY THAT IS.


"I DON'T NEED YOU SLOWING ME DOWN."
KUMO
I CAN'T QUITE REMEMBER, THOUGH.
MAYBE EVER SINCE FATHER AND MOTHER DIED.
I FEEL LIKE IT WASN'T ALWAYS LIKE THIS.
BUT IT CHANGED AT SOME POINT.
ALWAYS TREATING ME LIKE A LITTLE KID...
GRACK
THAT I CAN'T EVER BEAT HIM.
IT'S SO FRUSTRATING...
IN TENKA'S EYES, YOU STILL ARE

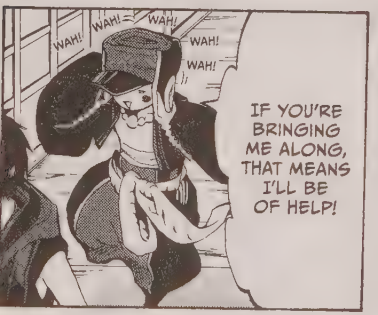

KUMO
MY BIG BROTHER IS ALWAYS LIKE THAT.
HE LIKES TO HANDLE ALL THE IMPORTANT STUFF HIMSELF.

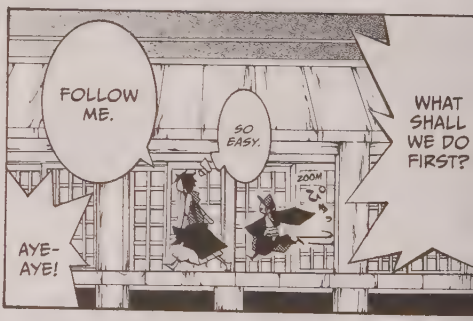

WHY ARE YOU GIVING IT TO ME?
I THOUGHT IT MEANT HE FINALLY RECOGNIZED ME. BUT...
CHUTARO!
SWISH
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
I CAN'T JUST STAY HERE!
-!
DASH
!


AND THAT HE NEVER RELIES ON ME.
FOR AS LONG AS CHUTARO COULD REMEMBER, OUR BIG BROTHER HAS RAISED US.
I KNOW THAT THIS JOB IS FULL OF DANGER.
I GOT THIS SWORD... FROM MY BIG BROTHER.
SORAMARU...
KUMO
THE REASON HE SPEAKS SO BLUNTLY TO US IS BECAUSE HE'S LOOKING OUT FOR US.
IT'S A PRIZED BLADE THAT'S BEEN PASSED DOWN THROUGH THE KUMO FAMILY FOR GENERATIONS.

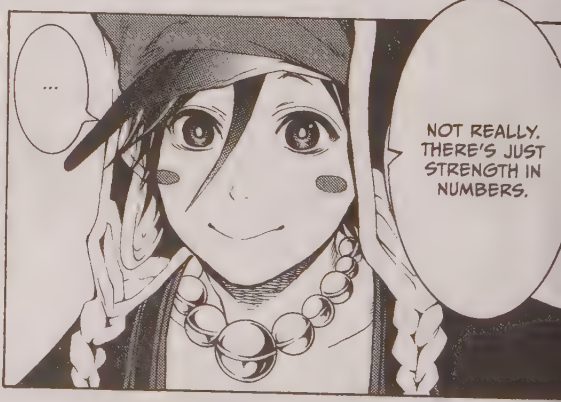

NOOOOO!
I DON'T WANNA! BROTHER TEN'S WORD IS LAW!
CHUTARO.
DON'T YOU WANT TO HELP BROTHER TENKA?
BINK


WHAAAAAAAAAAT?!
LET'S GO.


WAH!
WAH!
WAH!
WAH!
IF YOU'RE BRINGING ME ALONG, THAT MEANS I'LL BE OF HELP!

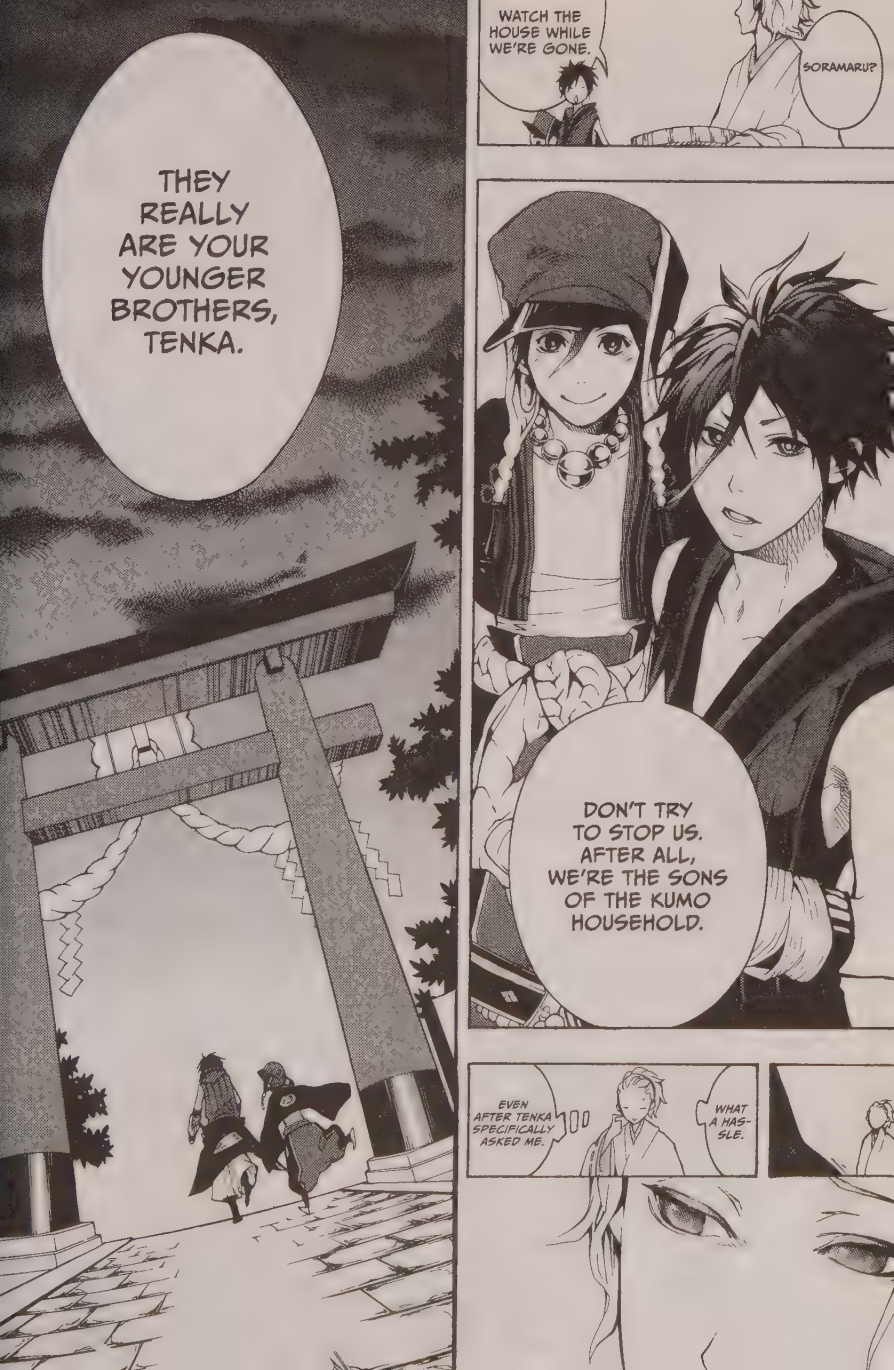

FOLLOW ME.
SO EASY.
ZOOM
WHAT SHALL WE DO FIRST?
AYE-AYE!


OOOOH, GOOD IDEA! SO YOU CAN COUNT ON ME!


...
NOT REALLY. THERE'S JUST STRENGTH IN NUMBERS.


SPLORSH
GYAAAAAH!
IF YOU'VE GOT THAT MUCH TIME TO KILL, THEN YOU SHOULD PRACTICE YOUR STONE-THROWING, YOU IDIOT!
WELL, HE SAID TO STAY "IN" THE HOUSE, BUT IT'S PRETTY HARD TO BE A GOOD BOY.
WRIGGLE
WRIGGLE
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
C'MON, WE'RE GOING.
GOING WHERE?
TO CATCH SOME CRIMINALS.


MAKING A FIRE!
CLACK
CLACK
WHAT ARE YOU UP TO NOW?
SO?
HUFF! HUFF! HUFF! HUFF!
I-IT MIGHT DRAW OUT THE CRIMINALS, SO A LITTLE FIRE WON'T HURT.
QUIT IT WITH THOSE DANGEROUS IDEAS!
ONLY A LITTLE BIT! RELAX.
GIVE A BRE WHAT YOU, PYRO MANIA
THAT'S NOT THE PROBLEM HERE!
THIS IS THE GROVE OF A VILLAGE SHRINE.
ZSH
BESIDES WE DON EVEN KNO IF THEY' AROUND HERE O NOT.


THEY REALLY ARE YOUR YOUNGER BROTHERS, TENKA.
WATCH THE HOUSE WHILE WE'RE GONE.
SORAMARU?
DON'T TRY TO STOP US. AFTER ALL, WE'RE THE SONS OF THE KUMO HOUSEHOLD.
EVEN AFTER TENKA SPECIFICALLY ASKED ME.
WHAT A HASSLE.


HYAA
KUMO
SPLAT
ZWIP
GET OFFA ME!
...!
DAMN IT. THOSE TWO BUFFOONS GOT THEIR BLADES TAKEN.
SORRY ABOUT THAT.
BROTHER SORA, HE'S GOT A KATANA!
HYDINA
ひょわ

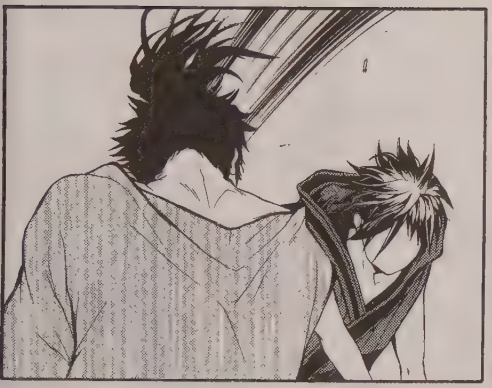

BROTHER SORA?!
YOU THERE! STOP RIGHT THERE!
SHIT!
IF HE'S RUNNING AWAY, HE'S GOTTA BE A CRIMINAL!
SWOOSH
!
AT LEAST HE'S FAST WHEN IT COMES TO HIS LEGS.


CLANG
WAH! WAH! WAH!
BROTHE SORA
STAND BACK, CHUTARO.
I'VE NEVER GONE UP AGAINST ANYONE BUT MY BIG BROTHER.
CAN I DO IT?

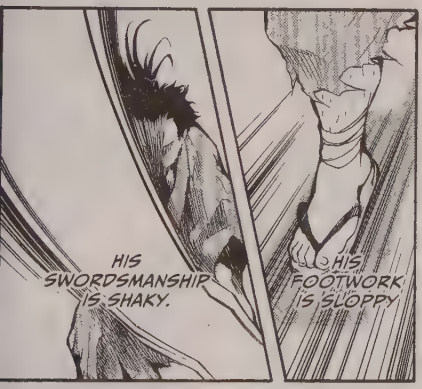

!
HM?


AND YOU'RE A CRIMINAL ON THE RUN.
WE'LL GUIDE YOU TO WHERE YOU OUGHT TO BE.
AS IF!
I KNOW WHO YOU ARE.
YOU'RE TWO OF THE THREE BROTHERS OF KUMO SHRINE. GUIDES TO THE PRISON.
I'M GOING TO MAKE THOSE BASTARDS IN GOVERNMENT...
REGRET THEY EVER DID AWAY WITH THE SAMURAI WAY.
IT'S BECAUSE OF RONIN LIKE YOU THAT THERE ARE SO MANY CRIMINALS.

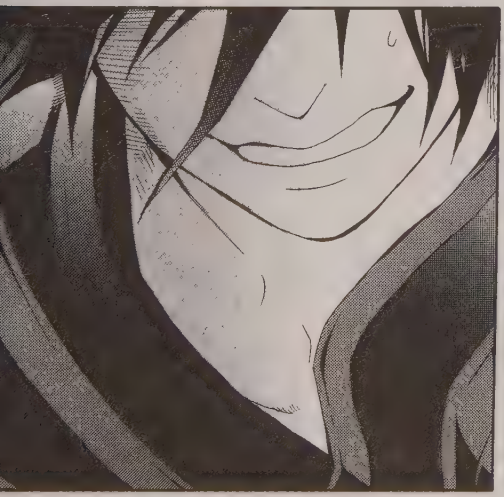

I'VE GOT THIS!
POW
...
B-BROTHER
SOOORAAAA

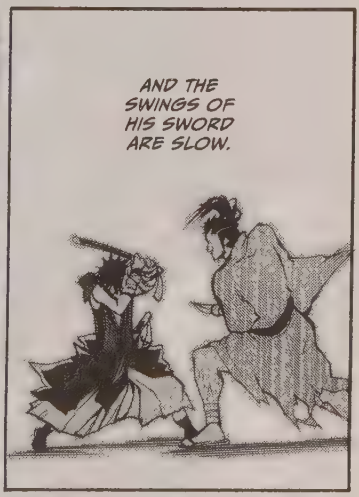



WHY, YOU LITTLE...

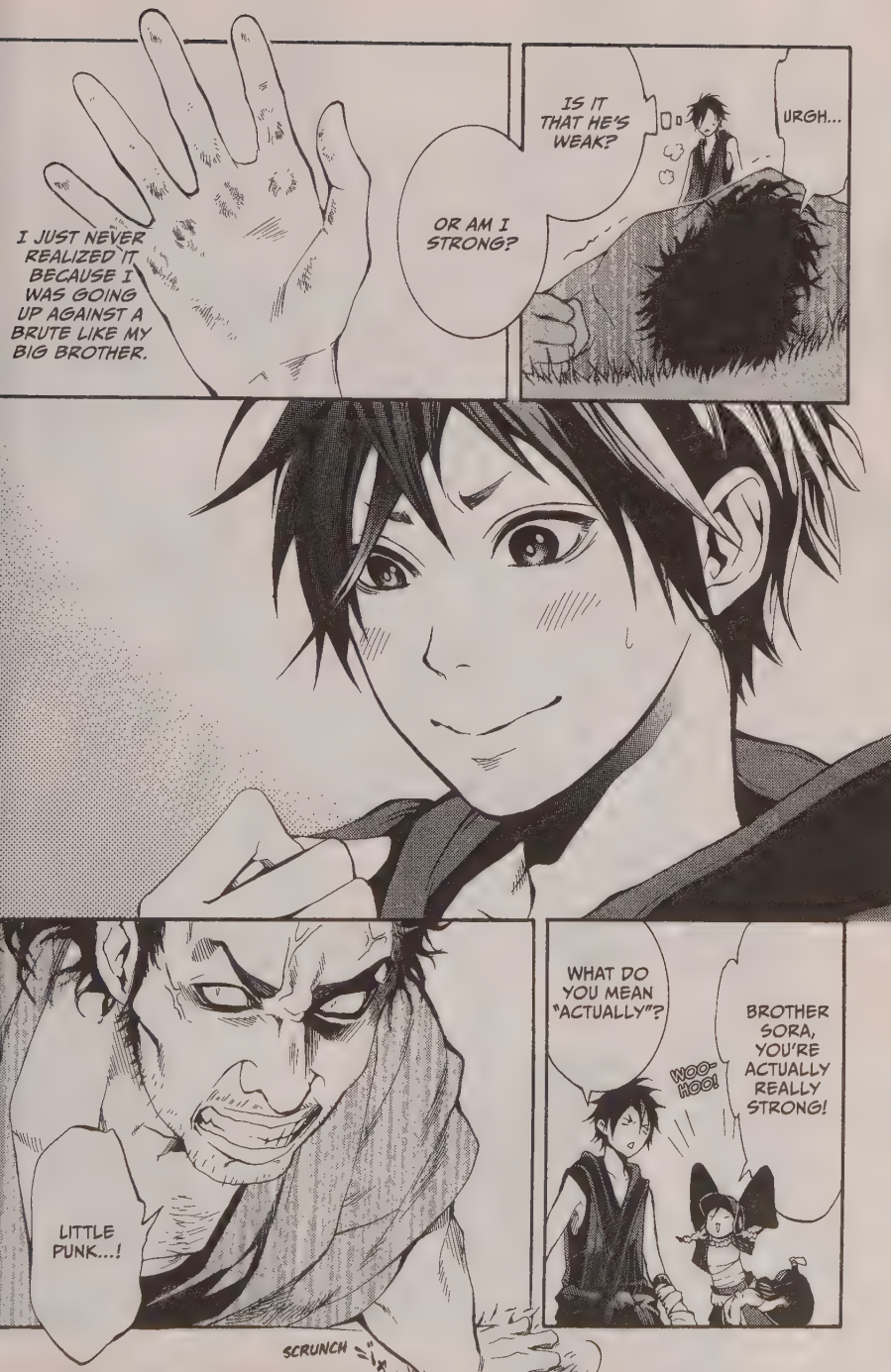

HIS SWORDSMANSHIP IS SHAKY.
HIS FOOTWORK IS SLOPPY

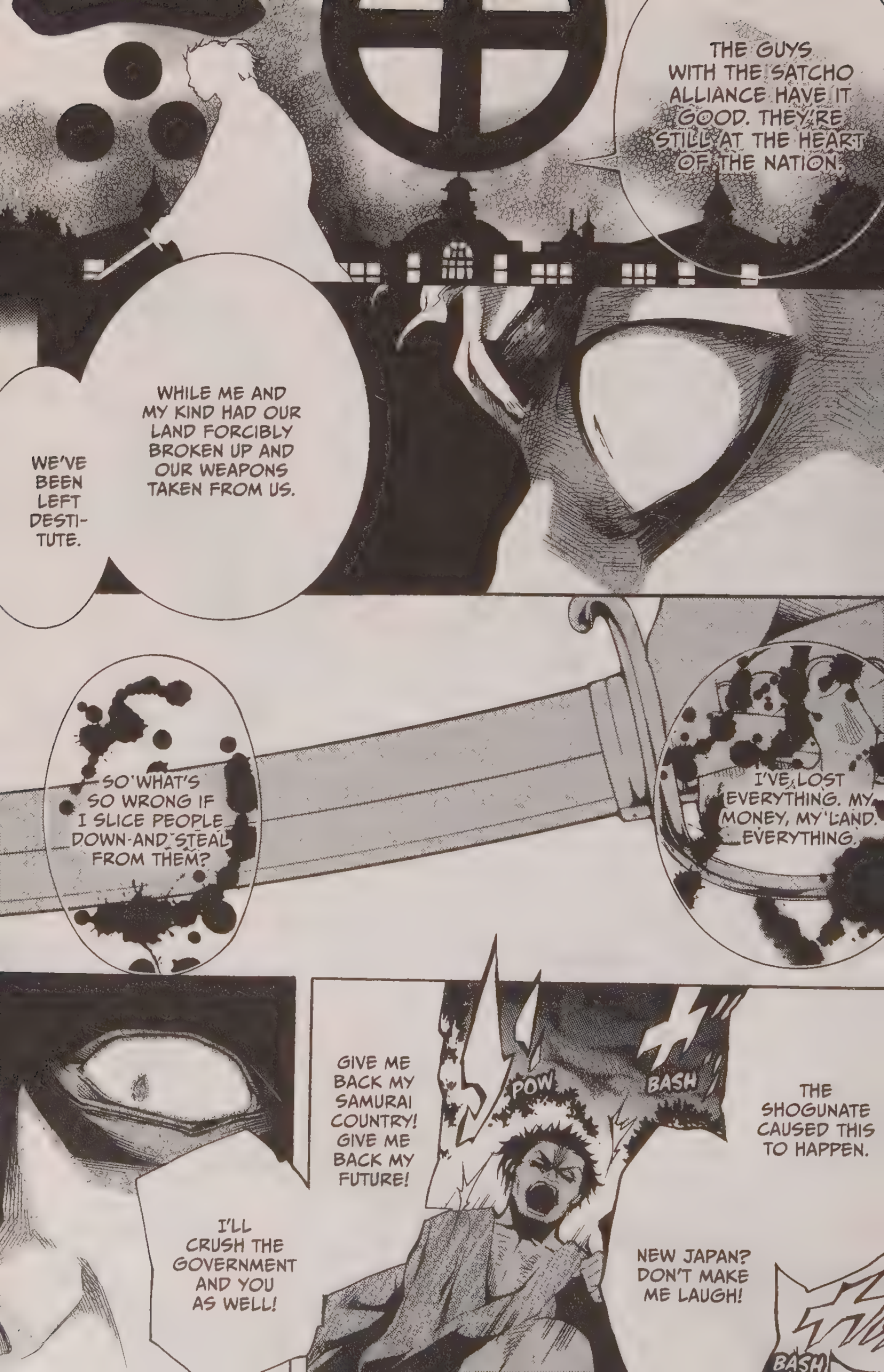





AND THE SWINGS OF HIS SWORD ARE SLOW.


BAH
?!
WAAAAAAH!
UH?
PIPE DOWN!
WAAAH!
WAAAH!
WAAAH!
WAAAH!
CHUTARO
DAMN IT, HE WAS STILL MOBILE!
I HAVE TO BE CAREFUL WITH WHAT MOVE I MAKE NEXT.
CHUTARO!
ULP—!


I JUST NEVER REALIZED IT BECAUSE I WAS GOING UP AGAINST A BRUTE LIKE MY BIG BROTHER.
OR AM I STRONG?
IS IT THAT HE'S WEAK?
URGH...
BROTHER SORA, YOU'RE ACTUALLY REALLY STRONG!
WOO-HOO!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN "ACTUALLY"?
LITTLE PUNK...!
SCRUNCH


THE GUYS WITH THE SATCHO ALLIANCE HAVE IT GOOD. THEY'RE STILL AT THE HEART OF THE NATION.
WHILE ME AND MY KIND HAD OUR LAND FORCIBLY BROKEN UP AND OUR WEAPONS TAKEN FROM US.
WE'VE BEEN LEFT DESTI-TUTE.
SO WHAT'S SO WRONG IF I SLICE PEOPLE DOWN AND STEAL FROM THEM?
I'VE LOST EVERYTHING. MY MONEY, MY LAND, EVERYTHING.
POW
BASH
GIVE ME BACK MY SAMURAI COUNTRY! GIVE ME BACK MY FUTURE!
THE SHOGUNATE CAUSED THIS TO HAPPEN.
I'LL CRUSH THE GOVERNMENT AND YOU AS WELL!
NEW JAPAN? DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH!
BASH


THWOCK
YOU MIGHT SEEM STRONG, BUT YOU HARDLY HURT ME. YOU REALLY ARE NOTHING BUT A CHILD.
A REAL FIGHT IS NOTHING LIKE PRACTICE. IT HAS TO BE TO THE DEATH!
...!
"YOUR SWORDSMANSHIP IS SO WEAK."
YOU'RE THIS COUNTRY'S BOOT-LICKERS.
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO US SAMURAI?
KOFU
CLOK
THAT'S QUITE A LOOK IN YOUR EYES. THAT'S THE SPIRIT!
BROTHER SORA!

YOU MUST BE THE SECOND SON. I'VE HEARD THAT THE ELDEST SON OF THE KUMO FAMILY IS FRIGHTENINGLY STRONG.
WHACK
THAT'S A MIGHTY FINE SWORD YOU'VE GOT THERE, FOR A KID.
NONE OF THIS WOULD'VE HAPPENED IF YOU'D UNSHEATHED IT FROM THE START.
DON'T TOUCH THAT.
RELAX.
I'LL SELL IT FOR A HIGH PRICE.
BASTARD!

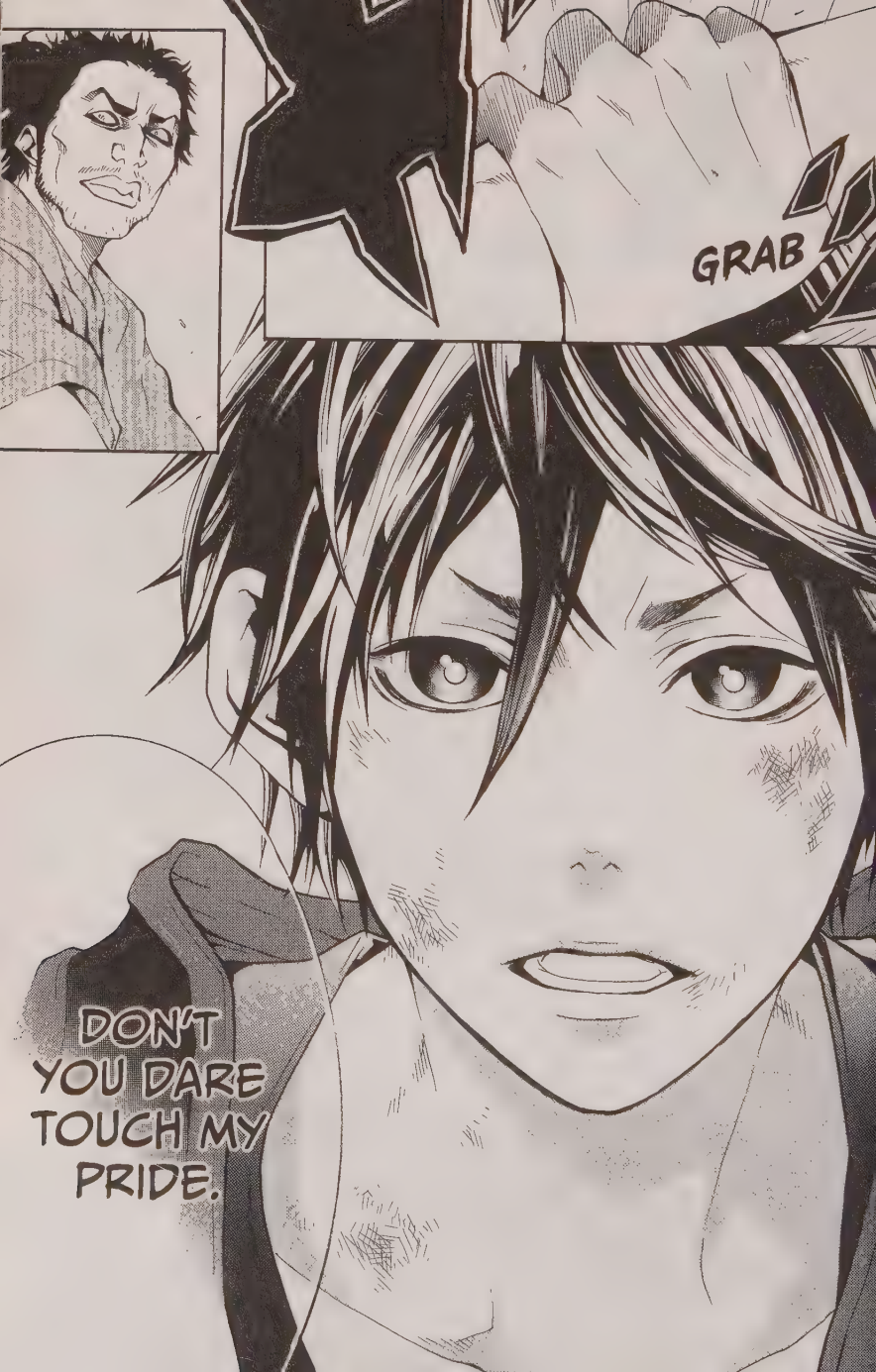

THE SAMU-RAI...
THAT'S RIGHT. SAMURAI HAD IT GOOD.
THEY COULD CUT DOWN WHOEVER THEY WANTED AND EVERYONE MADE WAY FOR THEM TO PASS THROUGH. NO COMPLAINTS.
IT USED O BE A GOOD JOB.
I THOUGHT THAT SAMURAI... WERE... HONOR-ABLE.
AH, SO YOU'VE HEARD!
SO IF THAT'S TRUE...
...THEN OU HAVE O RIGHT O CALL OURSELF ONE!

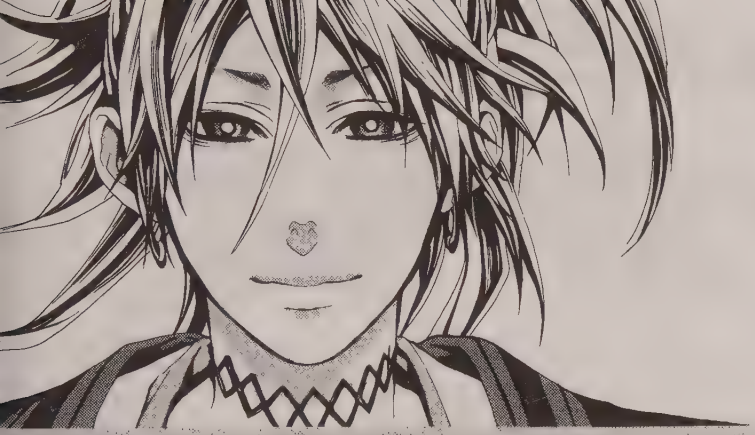

CHOMP
YOOOOOWCH!
YOU DUNNO NOTHIN'BOUT BRUVA TEN!
YOU LITTLE BRAT!
SWISH
THUD
BROTHER SORA!
ENOUGH WITH THE ATTITUDE!
I'LL KILL YOU BOTH!
ROAR


TO HAVE TO CARRY TWO LUMPS OF BAGGAGE LIKE YOU.
HONESTLY, I FEEL BAD FOR THE ELDEST SON.
TUD
YOU DON'T MAKE ANY MONEY AND JUST SLOW EVERYONE DOWN.
IN THIS DAY AND AGE, IT'S HARD ENOUGH JUST TO FEED YOURSELF.
HE JUST HASN'T TOLD YOU YET.
BROTHER TEN DOESN'T THINK WE'RE BAGGAGE!
HA HA! DID I NAIL IT?
FLAIL
AND IF THE TWO YOUNGER BROTHERS ARE LIKE THIS...
THEN THE BIG BROTHER MUST BE A DEADBEAT LOSER.

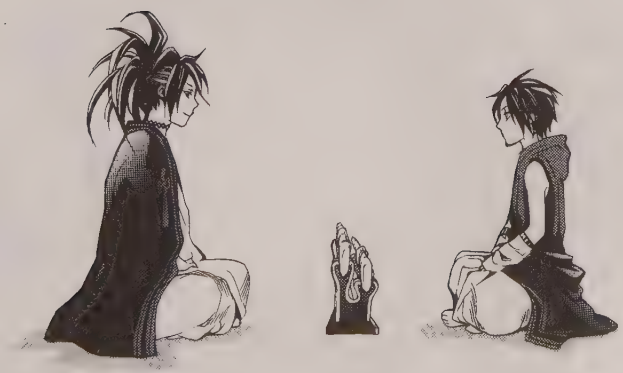

I'M SURE IT WILL PROTECT YOU WELL.
THIS SWORD IS FOR SELF-DEFENSE ONLY AND IS NOT TO SLAY ANYONE.
DON'T WORRY. YOU'RE MY LITTLE BROTHER.
...AND EVERYTHING BENEATH THE CLOUDS.
...THE KUMO FAMILY NAME...
YOU WILL PROTECT THE FAMILY AND THE SHRINE.
AND ONE DAY, WHEN YOU'RE GROWN UP, IT WILL BE YOUR TURN TO PROTECT US...


HUH?
IT'S RUSTED?
IT'S NOT MEANT FOR KILLING.
THAT'S A SWORD FOR SELF-DEFENSE THAT'S BEEN PASSED DOWN FOR GENERATIONS IN THE KUMO FAMILY.
WHY DID HE GIVE IT TO ME?

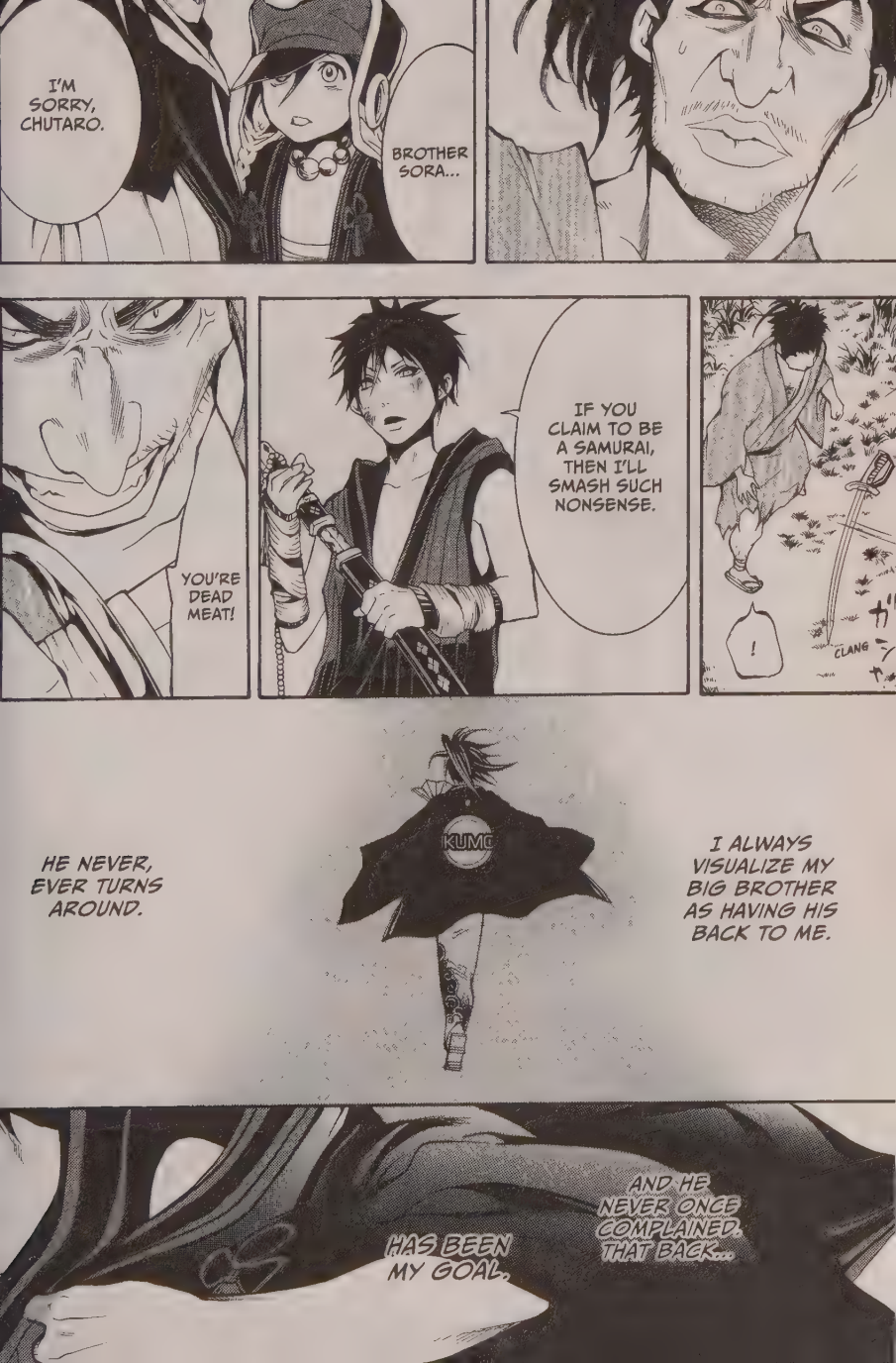

GRAB
DON'T YOU DARE TOUCH MY PRIDE.



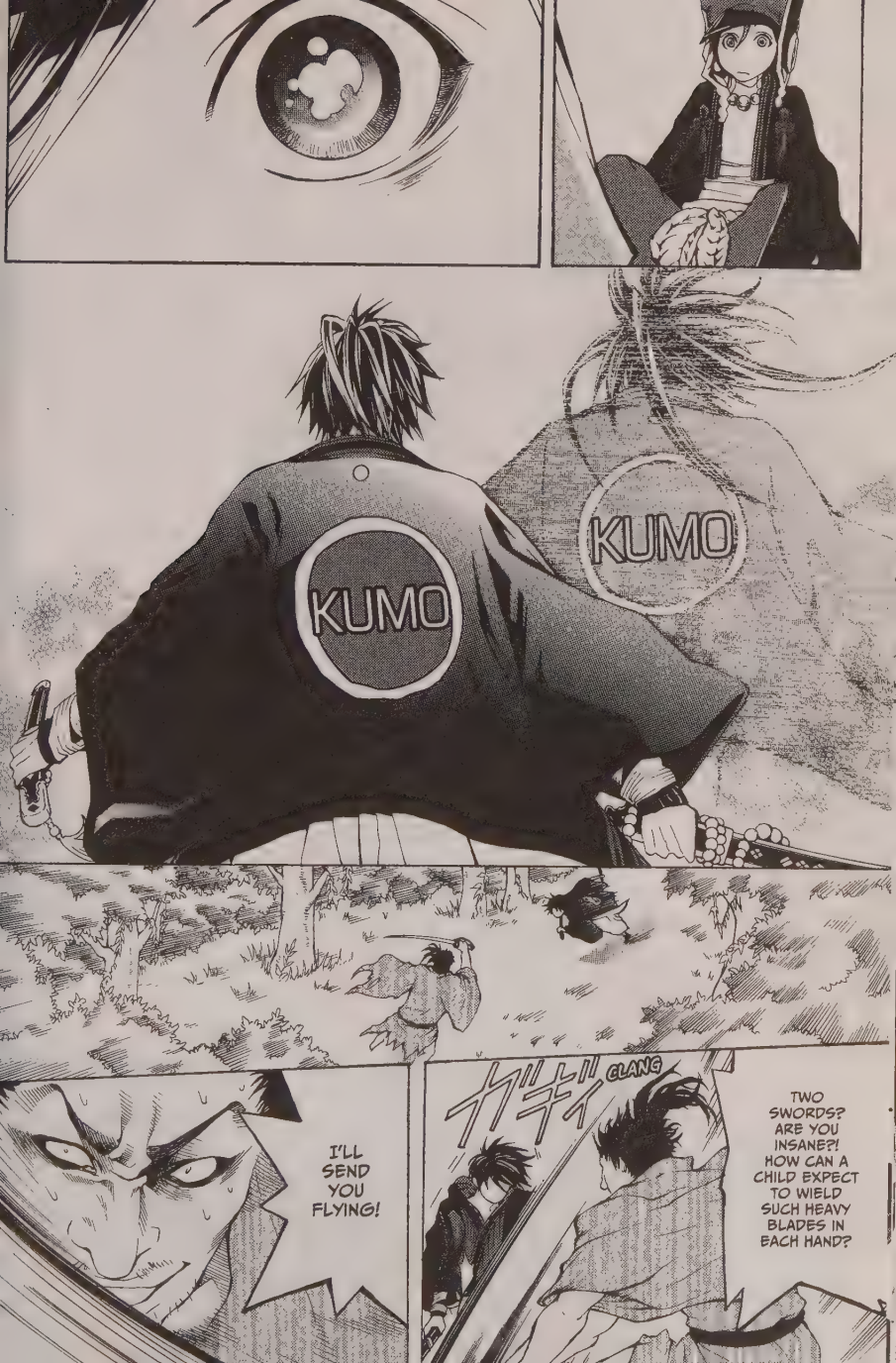
SHOW ME YOU
CAN SURPASS ME.




I AM SORAMARU.
SECOND SON OF THE KUMO FAMILY OF THE KUMO SHRINE.
AND I WILL SURPASS IT.
JUST WATCH ME.
KUM


I'M SORRY, CHUTARO.
BROTHER SORA...
YOU'RE DEAD MEAT!
IF YOU CLAIM TO BE A SAMURAI, THEN I'LL SMASH SUCH NONSENSE.
!
CLANG
KUMO
HE NEVER, EVER TURNS AROUND.
I ALWAYS VISUALIZE MY BIG BROTHER AS HAVING HIS BACK TO ME.
HAS BEEN MY GOAL.
AND HE NEVER ONCE COMPLAINED. THAT BACK...

TRY...
KUMO
TING
TING
I DON'T JUST PRACTICE THE SWORD EVERY DAY FOR FUN.
WHAT?!


KUMO
KUMO
I'LL SEND YOU FLYING!
ガキィ!! CLANG
TWO SWORDS? ARE YOU INSANE?! HOW CAN A CHILD EXPECT TO WIELD SUCH HEAVY BLADES IN EACH HAND?


BASH
THUD
DON'T YOU DARE TALK TO ME ABOUT SAMURAI.
THEY'RE STRONG, LARGE, AND PROUD.


...THIS ON FOR SIZE!


BROTHER SORA, YOU WERE AMAAAAZING!
WAH!
WAH!
WAH!
SO COOL!
SO COOL!
SO COOL!
QUIT CELEBRATING, AND HELP ME TIE HIM UP.
BUT I WONDER IF HE MIGHT GIVE ME SOME CREDIT AFTER THIS.
NAAH, I'VE STILL GOT PLENTY OF PRACTICE TO DO BEFORE THEN.
FOR A SECOND, YOU LOOKED JUST LIKE BROTHER TEN.
CHUTARO, GRAB HIM AND COME WITH ME!
I KNOW THAT LAUGH! IT'S BROTHER TEN!
BWA HA HA HA
ZMMMMMM~
ZMI-JORO

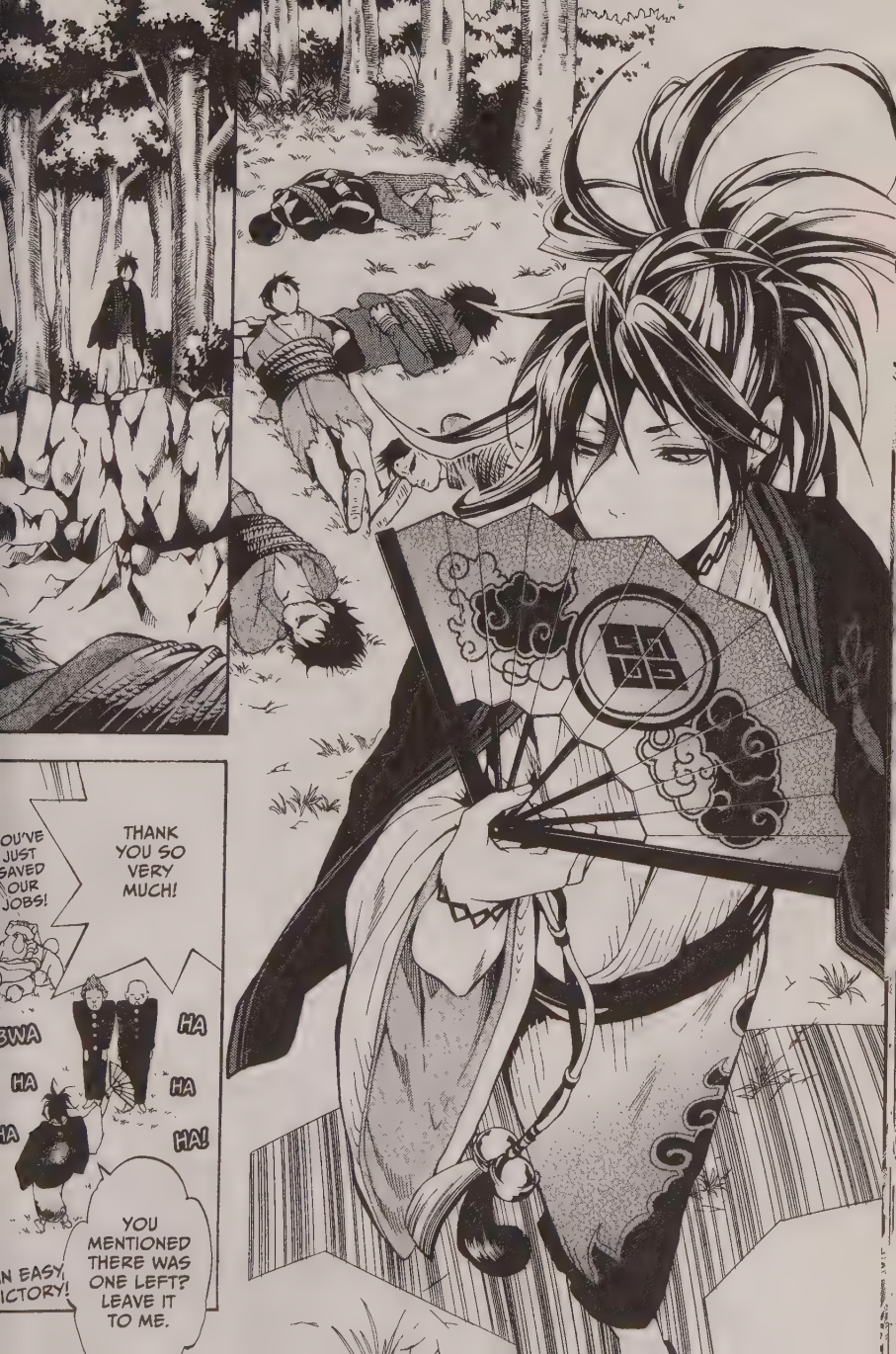

THE SAMURAI I KNOW IS AN ANNOYING GUY LIKE THAT.
KUMO




BROTHER TEN SURE IS INCREDIBLE!
THERE WERE A LOTTA CRIMINALS THAT GOT LOOSE!


YOU'RE STILL SO FAR AWAY, STUPID BIG BROTHER.




OU'VE JUST SAVED OUR JOBS!
THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH!
BWA HA HA
HA HA HA!
N EASY ICTORY!
YOU MENTIONED THERE WAS ONE LEFT? LEAVE IT TO ME.


BROTHE
SORA?
DON'T COME ANY CLOSER!
I CAN'T BREATHE!
THADUMP
THADUMP
THADUMP
THADUMP
THADUMP
I CAN'T BREATHE!
HEE HEE HEE!
I CAN'T BREATHE!
THADUMP
I CAN'T BREATHE!
THADUMP
DIE.
BIG BROTHER!!


GRAB
WHO IN THE—?
YOU'RE IN FOR IT NOW.
PREPARE TO DIE.
E WAS STILL ONSCIOUS?!

FRSSSSSH

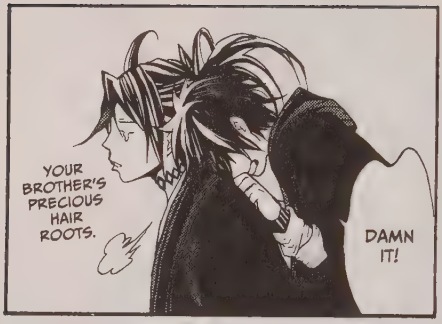
FRSSSSSH

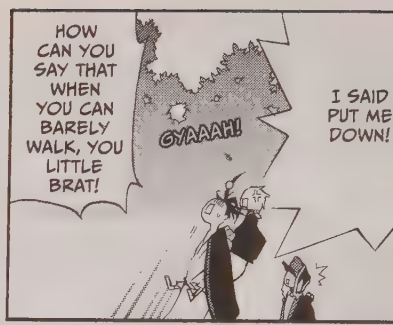

ARE YOU OKAY?
SOMEONE... WAS DEAD.
THADUMP
WHAT WAS THAT JUST NOW?
THADUMP
THADUMP
...HU
BROTHER?
HUH?
TREMBLE
OH, IT'S NOTHING SERIOUS.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING.
!
BROTHER! YOU'RE WOUNDED!
CALM DOWN YOU'RE ALL RIGHT.
IT'S OKAY NOW.

GORAMARU!

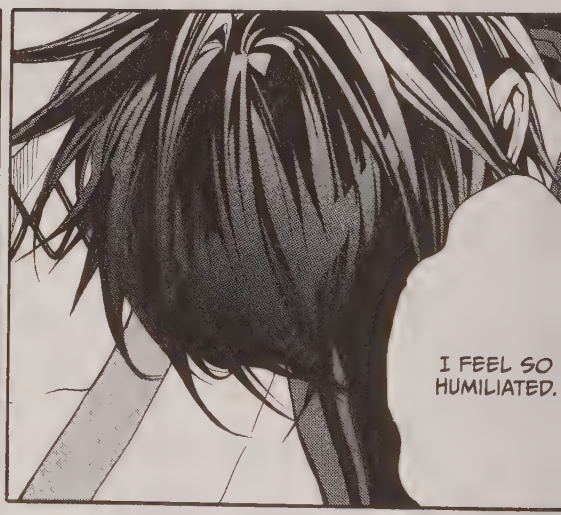

WAIT!
HELP!!
THAT WHITE HAIR...
VIOLET EYES...
YOU'RE FROM THAT CLAN...!
RIGHT NOW, I'M RESIDING AT THE KUMO SHRINE.
IF YOU'VE LEARNED YOUR LESSON, YOU WILL STAY AWAY FROM THE THREE SONS UNDER THE CLOUDS.
CRUNCH

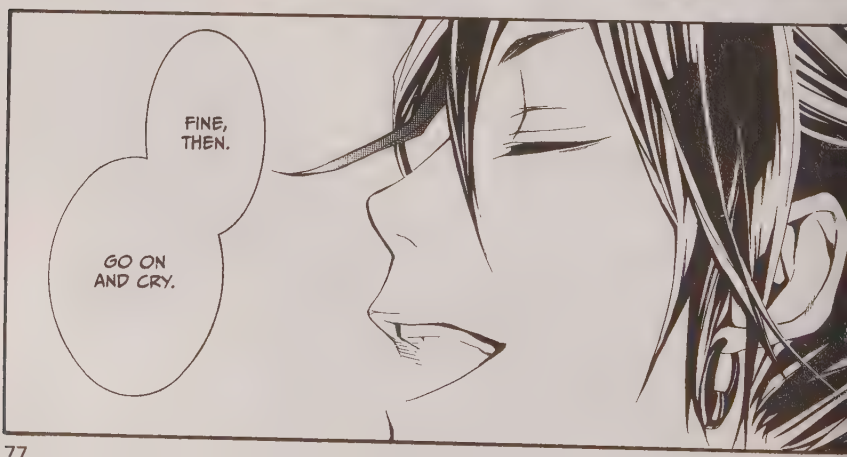

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH BROTHER SORA?
NOTHING AT ALL.
SORRY, SHIRASU, BUT WOULD YOU MIND HANDLING THE REST?
BUT OF COURSE.
SLITHER ズル
UGH...
WAIT.
Y- YOU'RE...

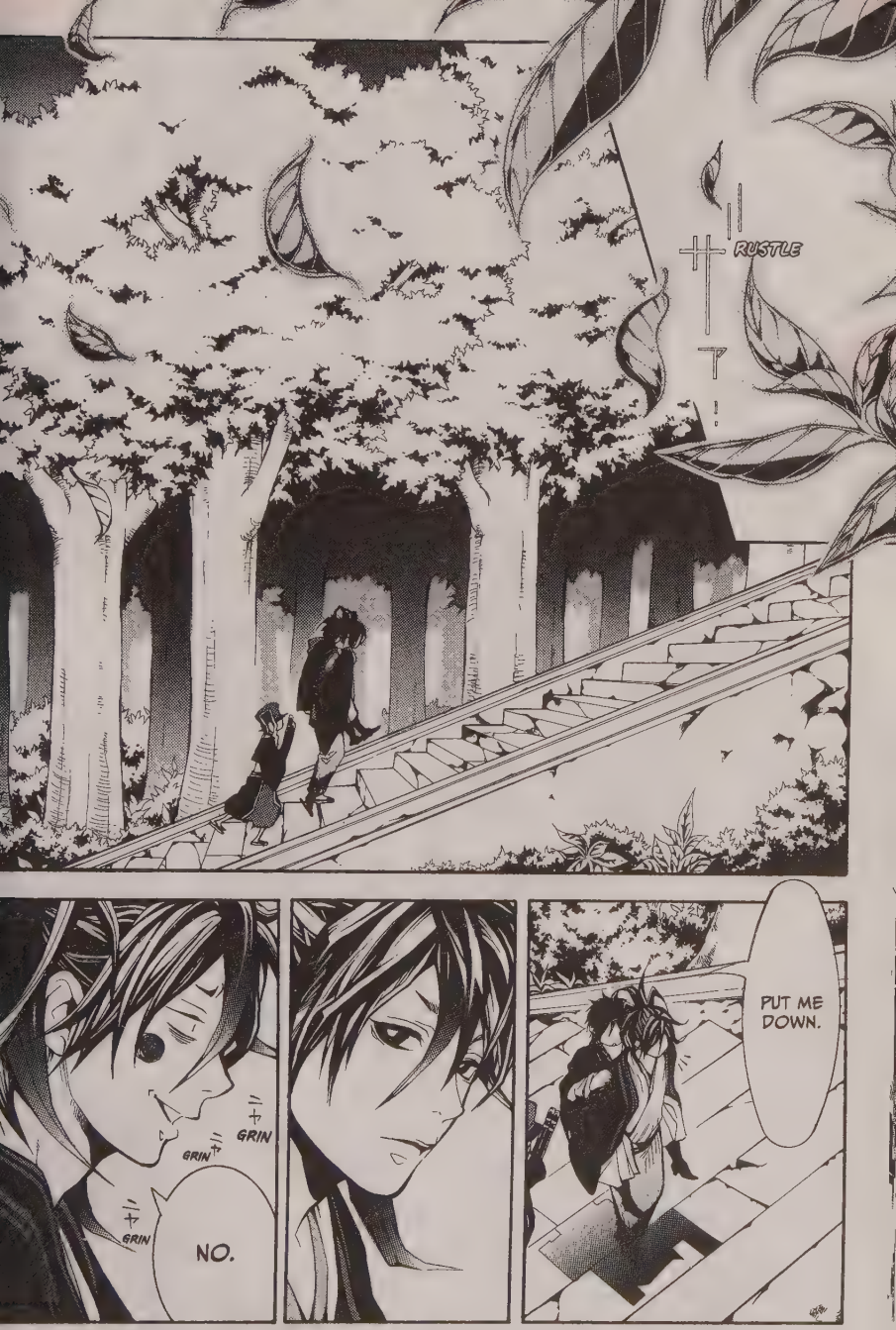

YOUR BROTHER'S PRECIOUS HAIR ROOTS.
DAMN IT!


HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT WHEN YOU CAN BARELY WALK, YOU LITTLE BRAT!
GYAAAH!
I SAID PUT ME DOWN!


ARE YOU KIDDING ME?
HUH? WHAT ARE YOU CRYING FOR?
BWA HA HA HA!
LEAVE ME ALONE!

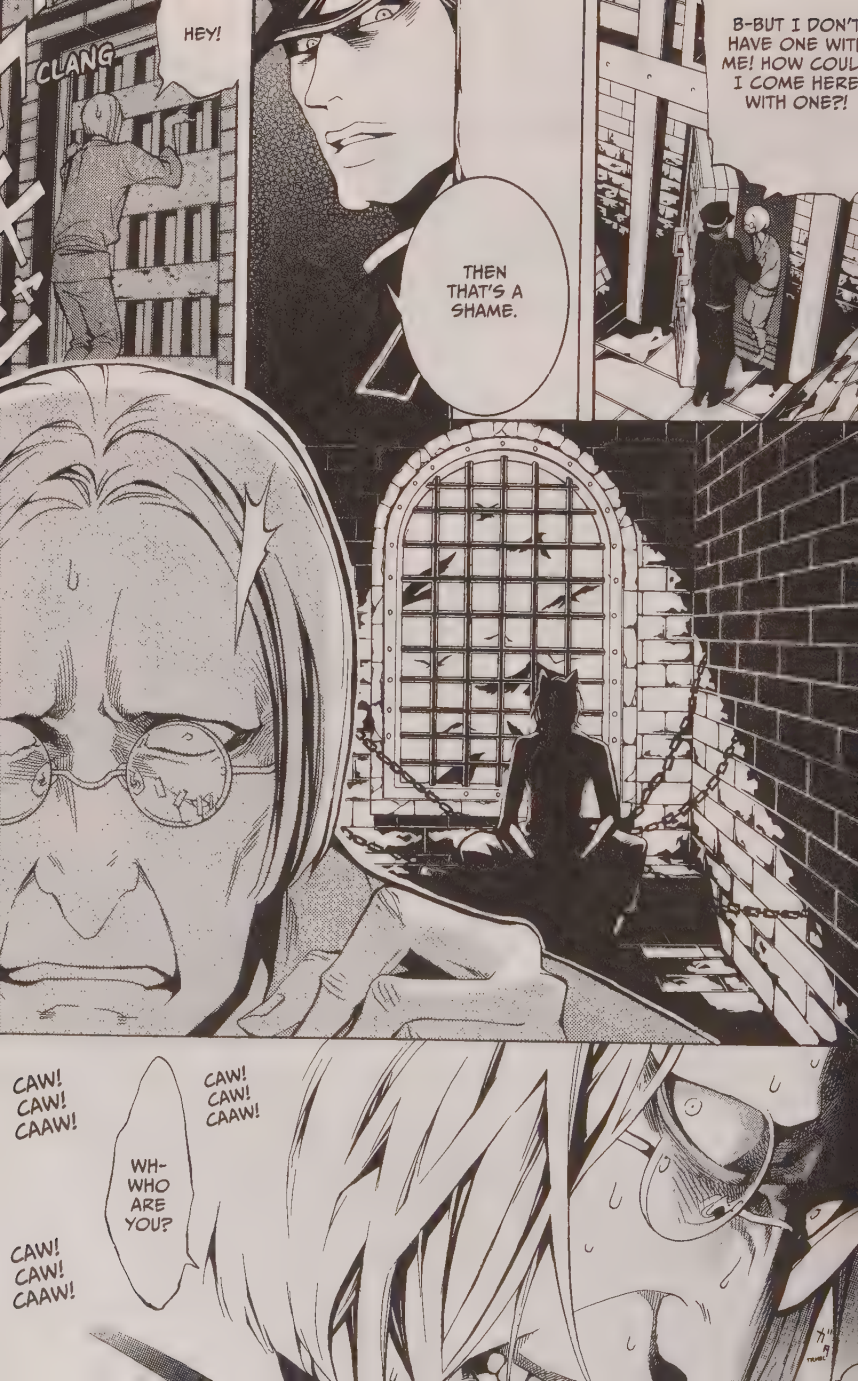

I FEEL SO HUMILIATED.


FINE, THEN.
GO ON AND CRY.

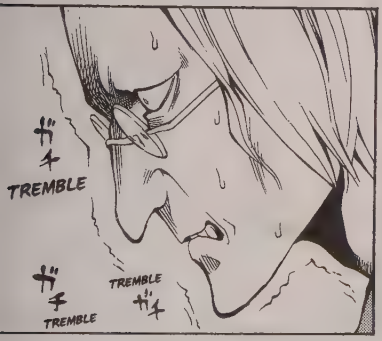

RUSTLE
PUT ME DOWN.
NO.
GRIN
GRIN
GRIN


FLAP
CAW!
CAW!
CAW!

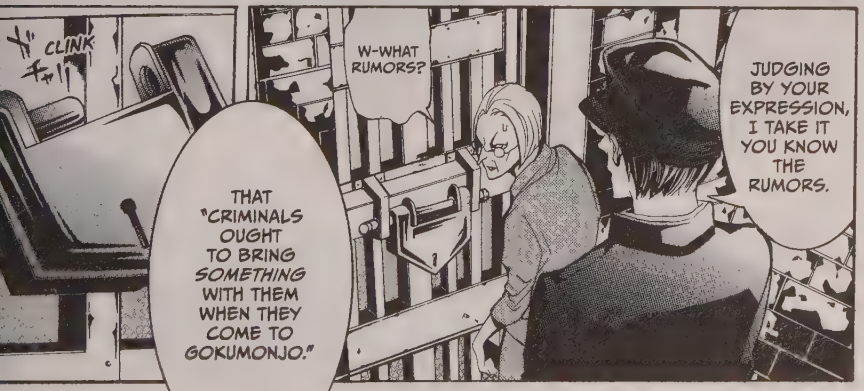

CRY ALL YOU WANT...
AND GROW UP, SORAMARU.

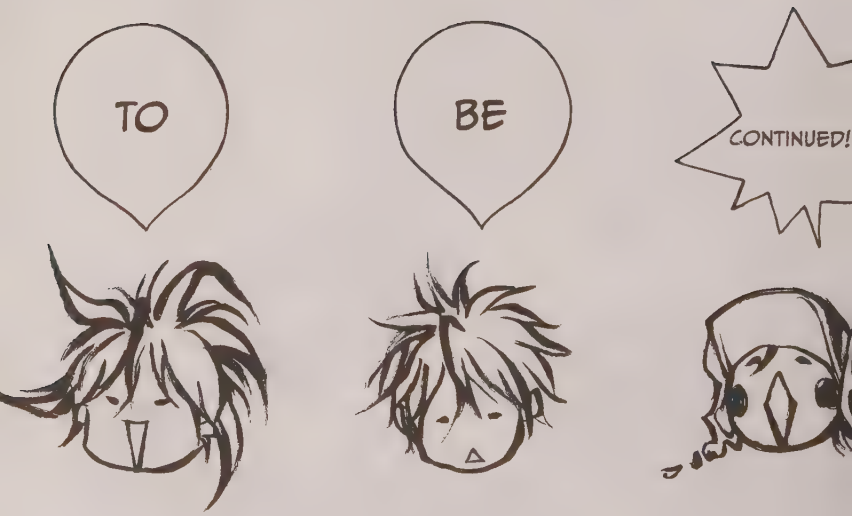

CLANG
HEY!
THEN THAT'S A SHAME.
B-BUT I DON'T HAVE ONE WITH ME! HOW COULD I COME HERE WITH ONE?!
CAW! CAW! CAAW!
WH-WHO ARE YOU?
CAW! CAW! CAAW!
CAW! CAW! CAAW!




TREMBLE
TREMBLE
TREMBLE


KEEP WALKING, ROOKIE.


CLINK
W-WHAT RUMORS?
JUDGING BY YOUR EXPRESSION, I TAKE IT YOU KNOW THE RUMORS.
THAT "CRIMINALS OUGHT TO BRING *SOMETHING* WITH THEM WHEN THEY COME TO GOKUMONJO."


TO
BE
CONTINUED!


CAW!
CAW!
CAW!
CAW!
CAW!
CAW!
CAW!
CAW!
CAW!


ON A
BURNING
SUMMER D
Fleeting Laughter
Part I
BENEATH A
MUDDIED SKY
THAT SEEMS
TO LAST FOR
ETERNITY...
WE
TOUCHED
FOR A
MOMENT.

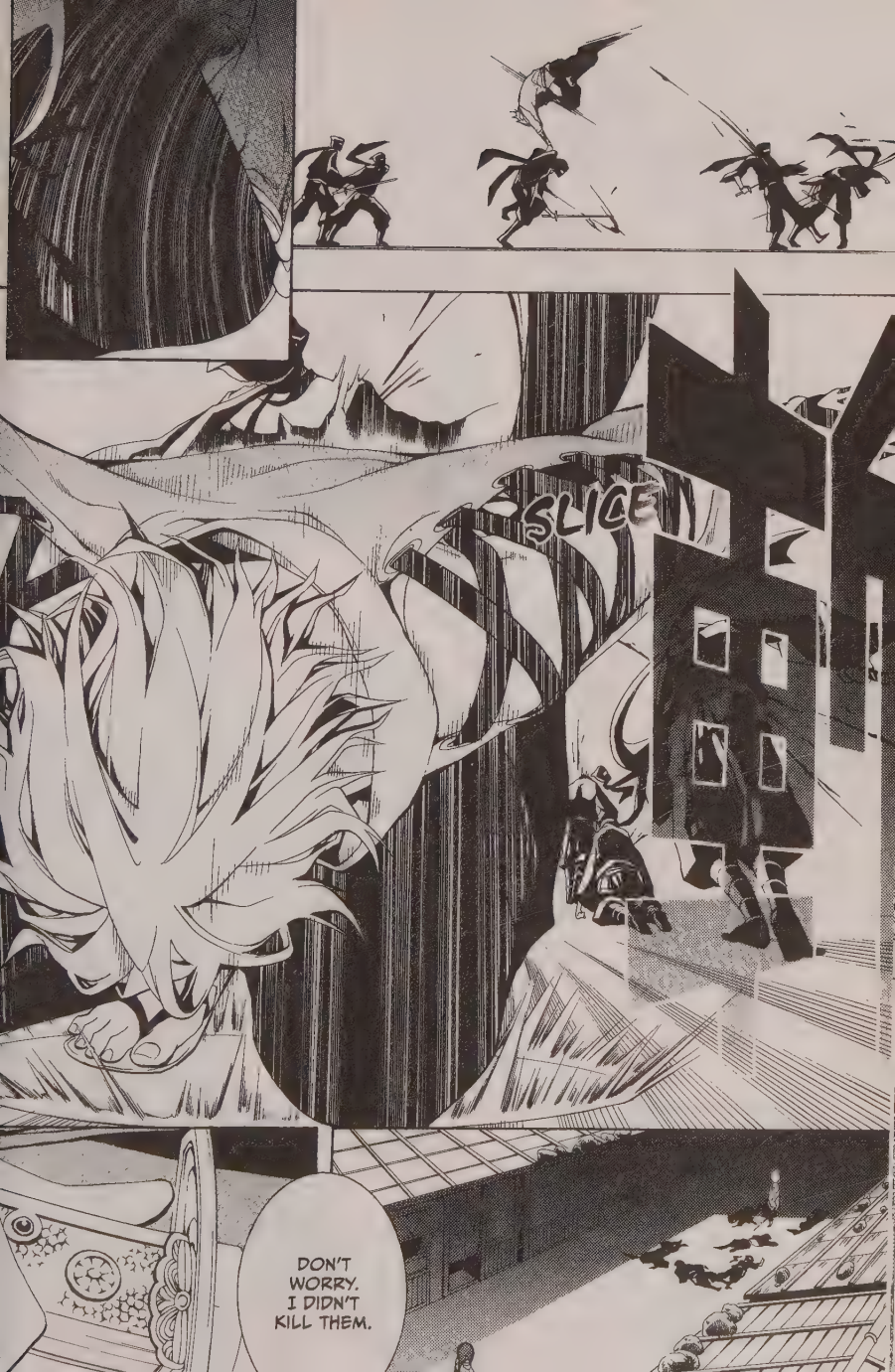

FLEETING LAUGHTER
THIS STORY TAKES PLACE 600 YEARS BEFORE LAUGHING UNDER THE CLOUDS
THIS IS A STORY THAT I WROTE BEFORE THE "LAUGHING UNDER THE CLOUDS" SERIES. IT TAKES PLACE IN THE SAME SETTING AND IS SET IN THE KAMAKURA PERIOD, 600 YEARS BEFORE THE MEIJI ERA. CHARACTERS THAT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT CONNECTION TO THE THREE BROTHERS ALSO MAKE AN APPEARANCE, SO PLEASE ENJOY THIS SOMEWHAT FLEETING STORY.
KARAKARAKEMURI

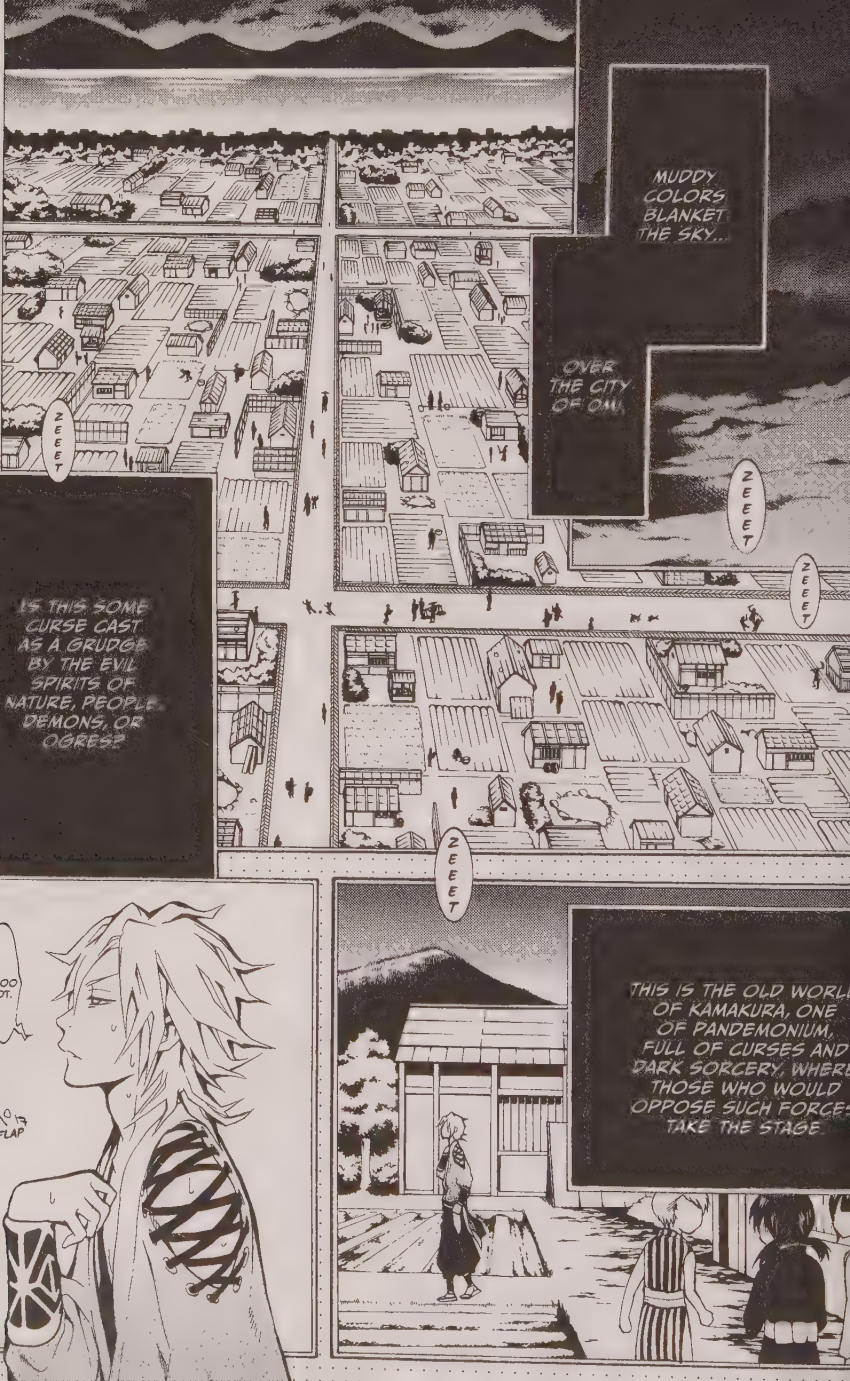

HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!
I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU.
SCUFF
SCUFF

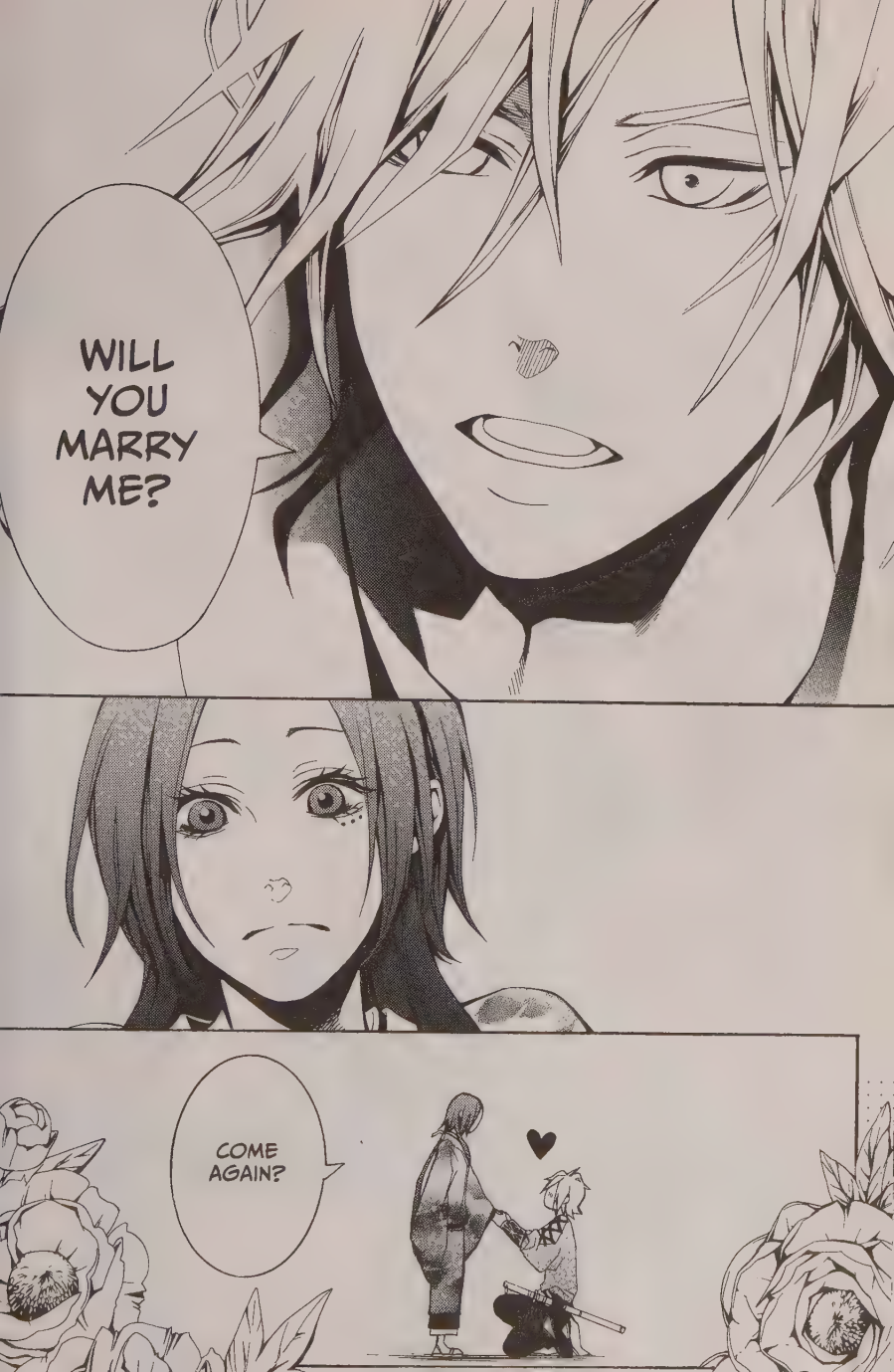

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE, MAKING A MOVE ON HER?
WHAT ON EARTH...? I THOUGHT YOU WERE WITH THEM.
ME? WITH THEM?
I'M NOT INTO GANGING UP ON ONE DEFENSE-LESS GIRL.
I WAS LOOKING FOR YOU, BUT IT SEEMS YOU'VE FOUND YOURSELF IN A BIT OF TROUBLE.
YOU BAST-ARD!
STEP BACK FOR A MOMENT.
HUH?

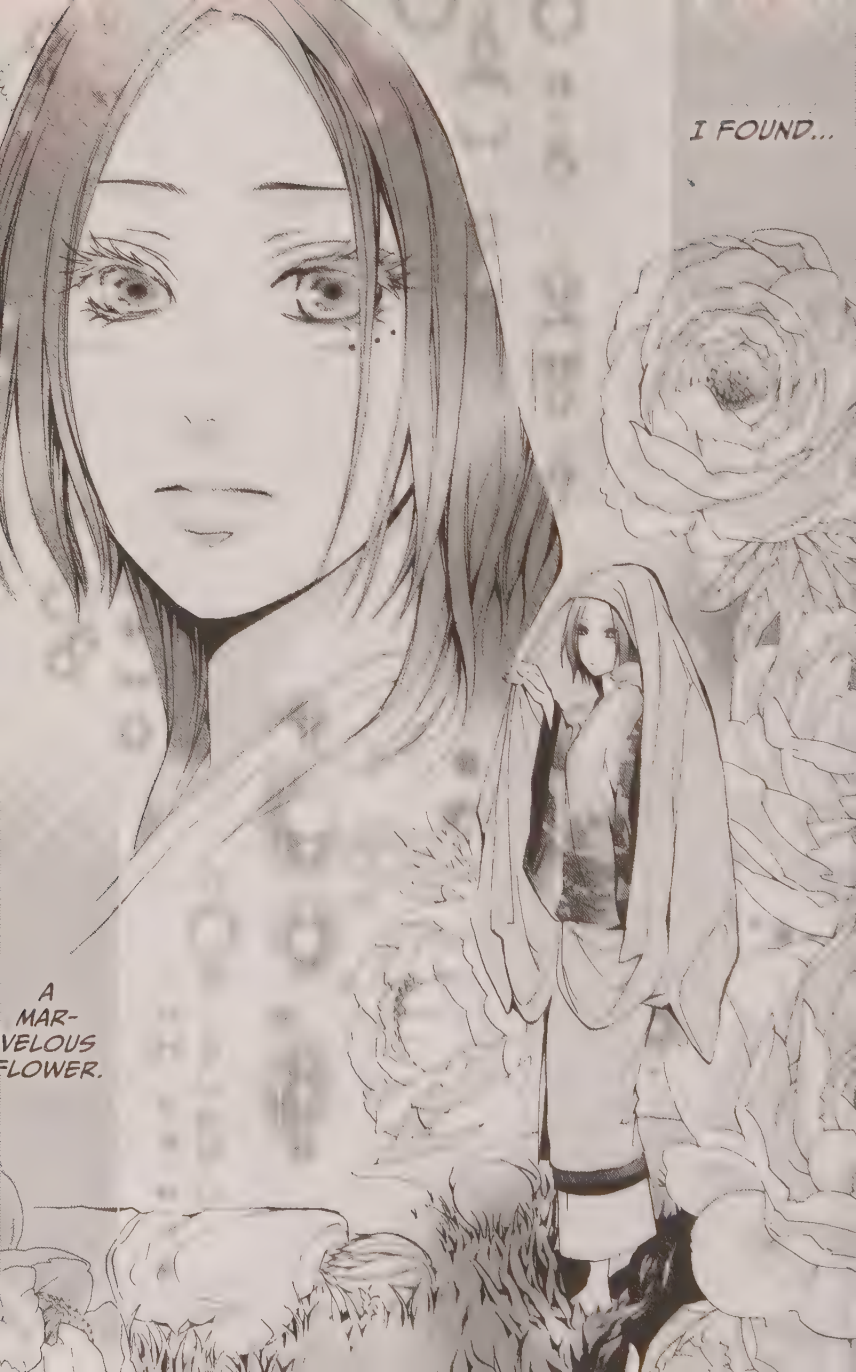

...!
FWP
FWP
WHOOSH
HUH?

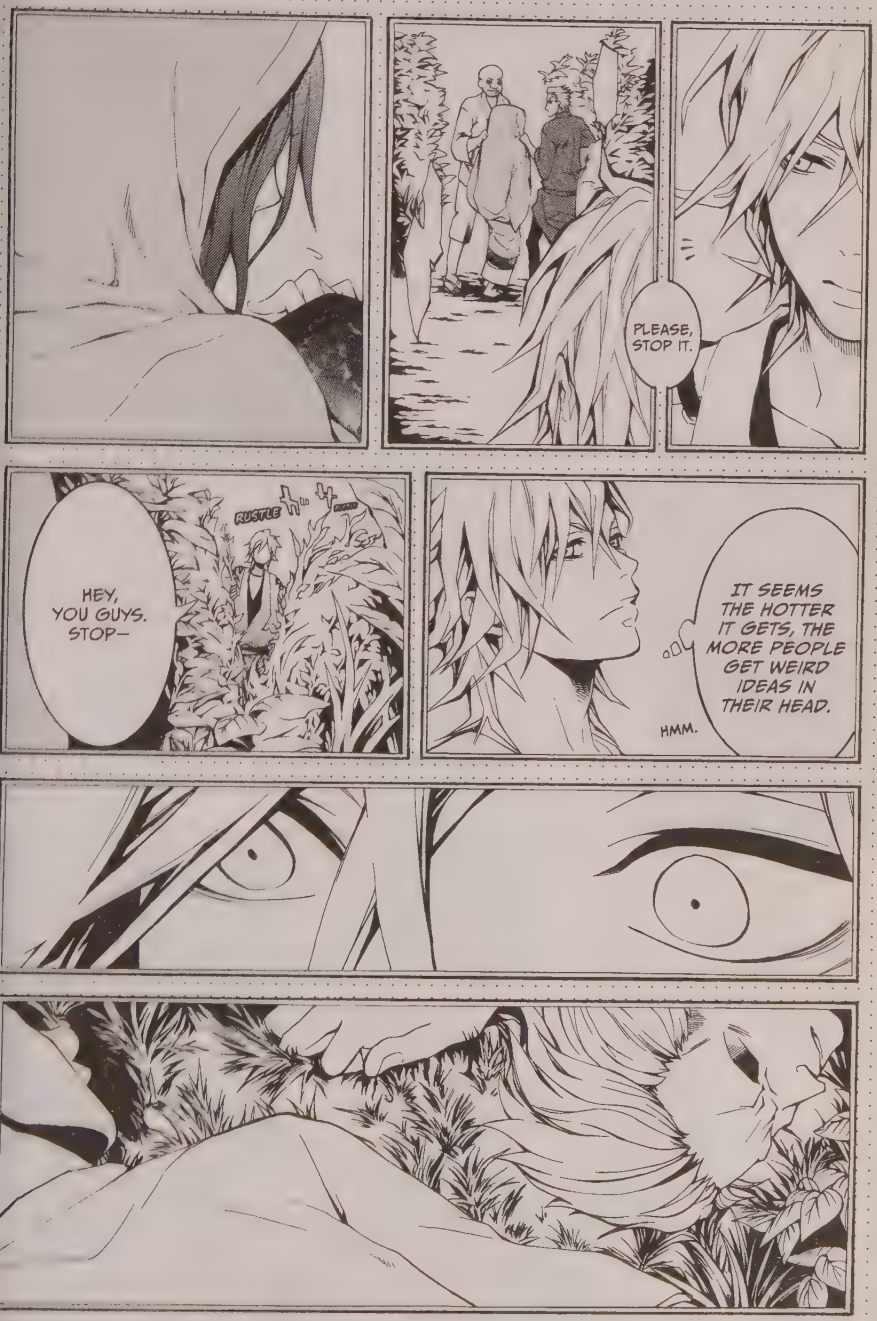

EVEN IF I'M CALLED A BLACK SHEEP...
I'VE STILL GOT CONFIDENCE WHEN IT COMES TO THE BLADE.
SCUFF
YOU'RE NOT HURT, ARE YOU?
NO. BUT... WHO ARE YOU?
SCUFF
SCUFF
SCUFF


SLICE
DON'T WORRY. I DIDN'T KILL THEM.

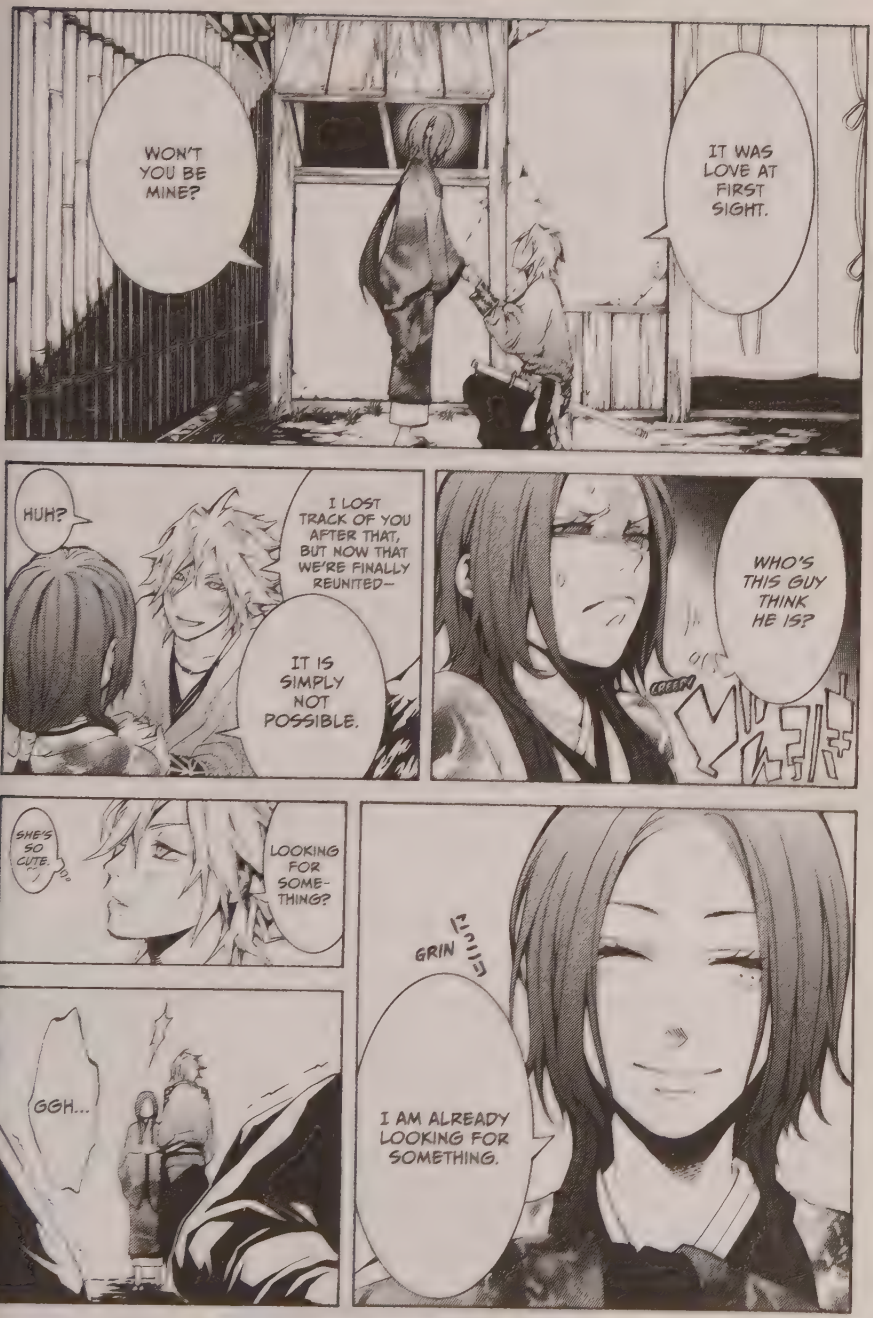

MUDDY COLORS BLANKET THE SKY...
OVER THE CITY OF OMI.
ZEEET
ZEEET
ZEEET
ZEEET
IS THIS SOME CURSE CAST AS A GRUDGE BY THE EVIL SPIRITS OF NATURE, PEOPLE, DEMONS, OR OGRES?
THIS IS THE OLD WORLD OF KAMAKURA, ONE OF PANDEMONIUM, FULL OF CURSES AND DARK SORCERY, WHERE THOSE WHO WOULD OPPOSE SUCH FORCES TAKE THE STAGE.


WILL YOU MARRY ME?
COME AGAIN?


I FOUND...
A MAR-
VELOUS
FLOWER.

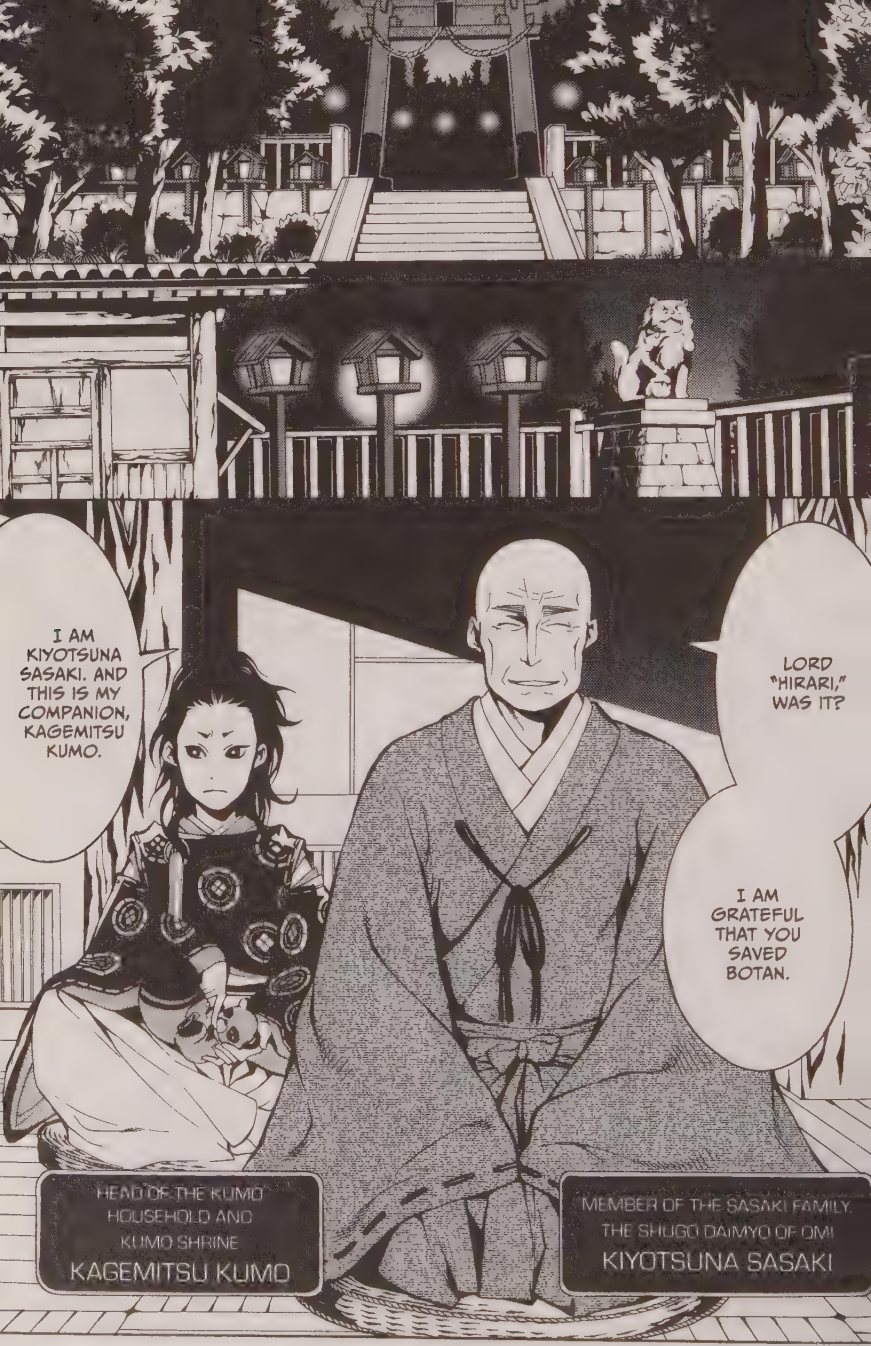

PLEASE, STOP IT.
IT SEEMS THE HOTTER IT GETS, THE MORE PEOPLE GET WEIRD IDEAS IN THEIR HEAD.
HMM.
RUSTLE
HEY, YOU GUYS. STOP—


GAH!
HRRGH...
WHAT NOW?
BLORP
BLORP
BLORP
STOP...
AAAH!
CRAK!!
CRAK!!
CRAK!!
BLORP
AAUGH!
DAMN IT!
WE'RE DEAD!
ORO!
AH!
AAAA-AUGH!
BLORP
CRAK!!

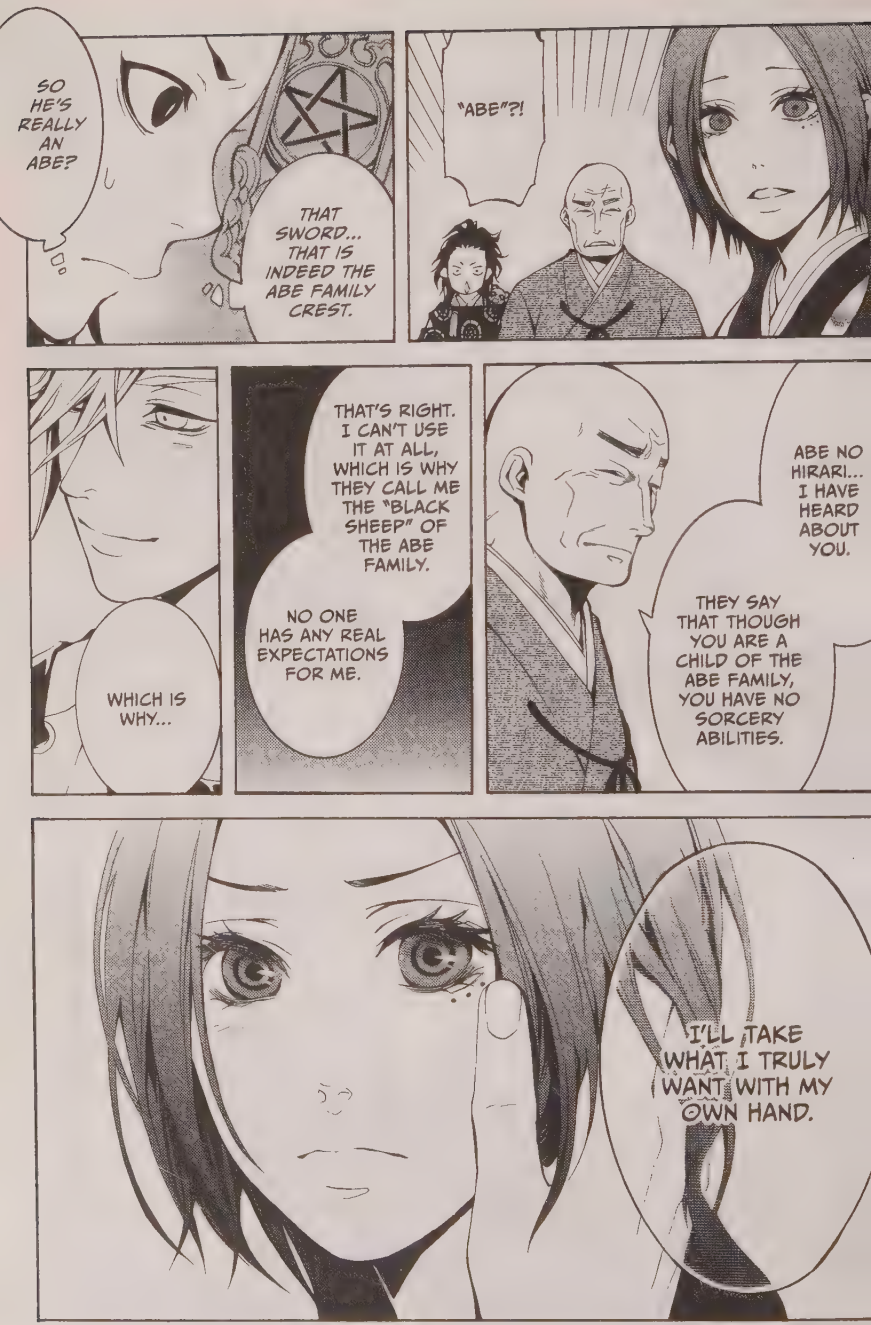

WON'T YOU BE MINE?
IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.
HUH?
I LOST TRACK OF YOU AFTER THAT, BUT NOW THAT WE'RE FINALLY REUNITED—
IT IS SIMPLY NOT POSSIBLE.
WHO'S THIS GUY THINK HE IS?
SHE'S SO CUTE.
LOOKING FOR SOME-THING?
GRIN
I AM ALREADY LOOKING FOR SOMETHING.
GGH...

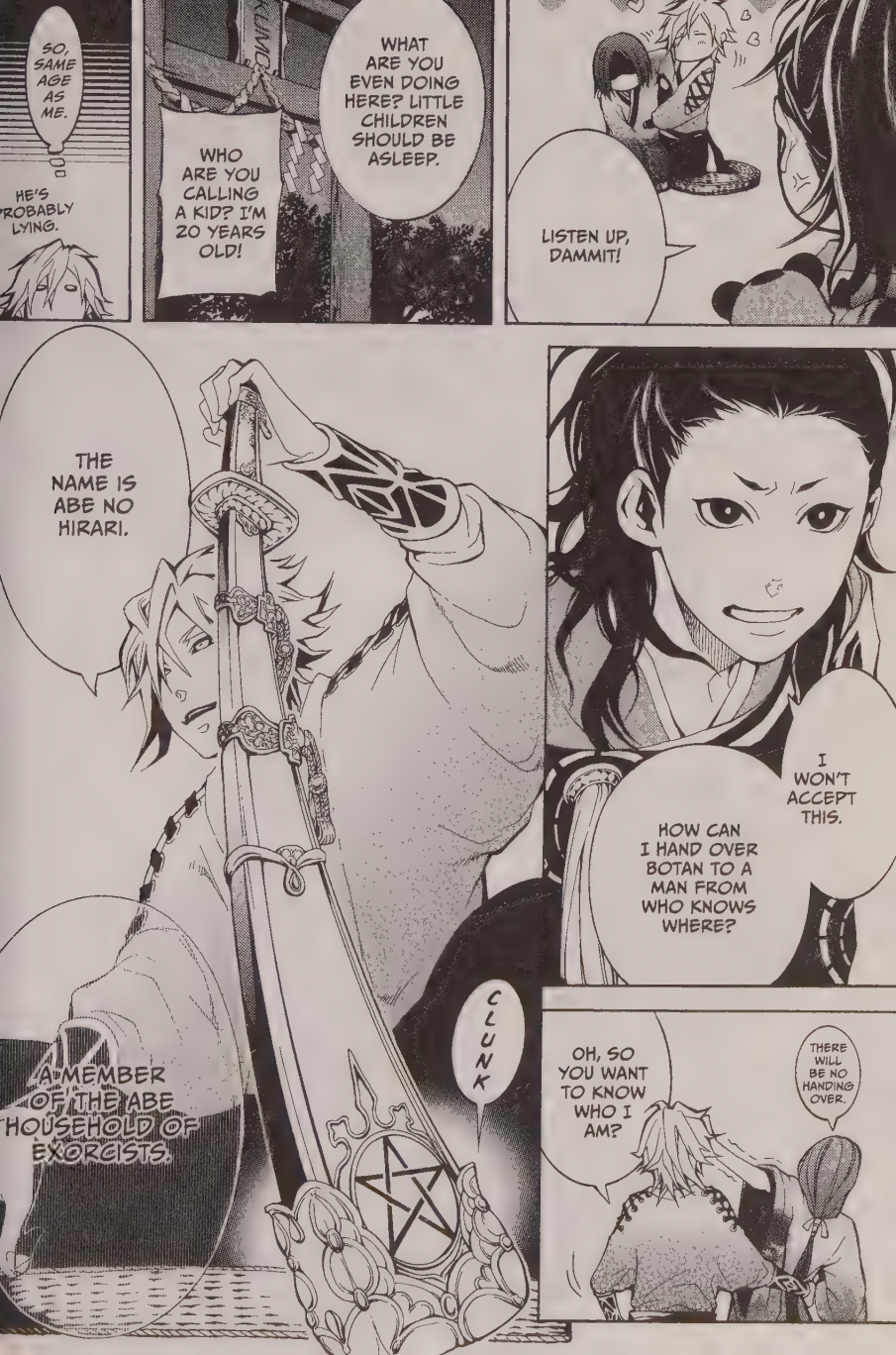

THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO LEAD ME TO "OROCHI."
WHAT THE HECK WAS THAT?
IT'S NO USE.
OROCHI!
BOTAN, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!

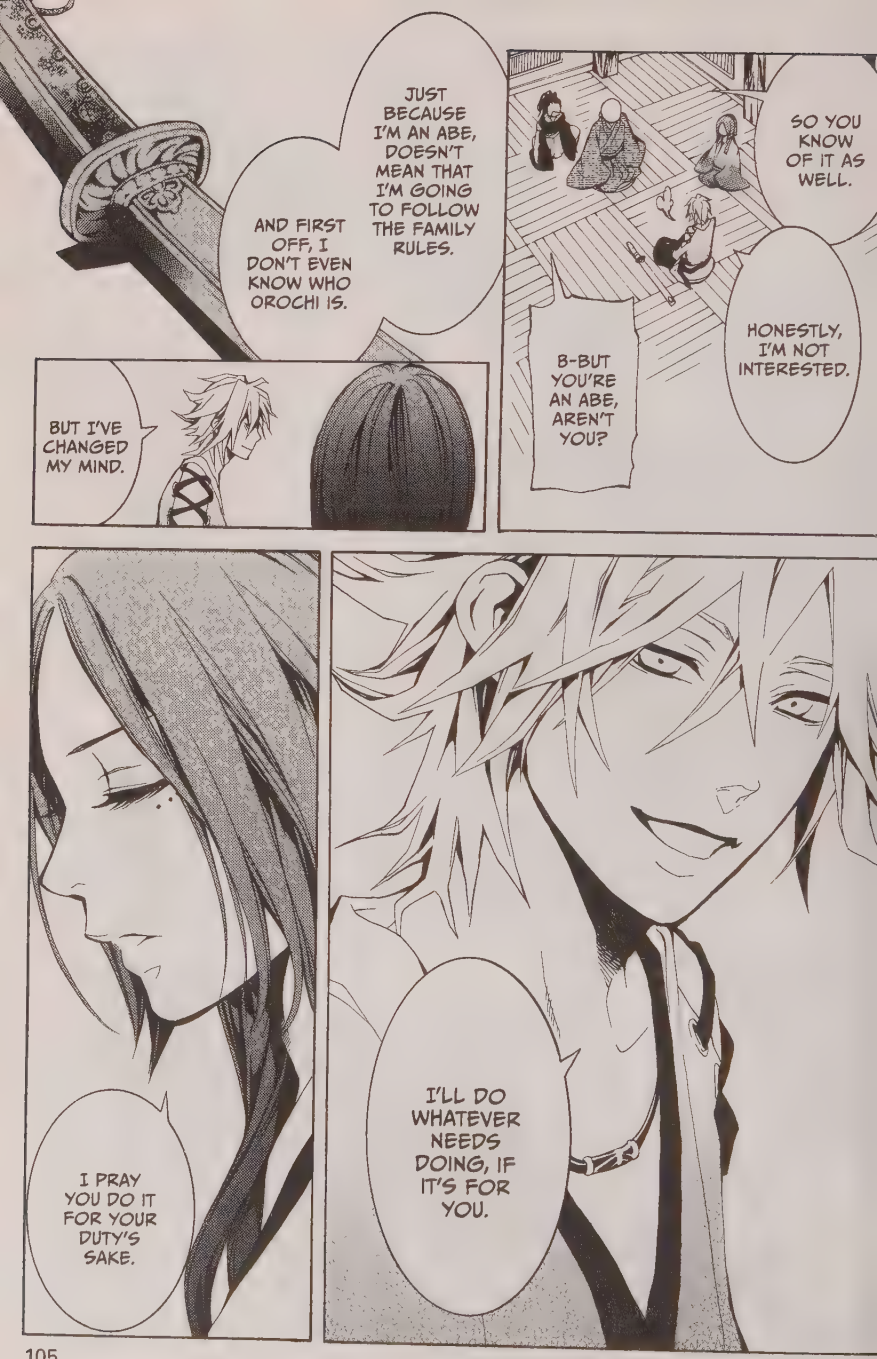

SWIFF
SPLAT
THUD


I AM KIYOTSUNA SASAKI. AND THIS IS MY COMPANION, KAGEMITSU KUMO.
LORD "HIRARI," WAS IT?
I AM GRATEFUL THAT YOU SAVED BOTAN.
HEAD OF THE KUMO HOUSEHOLD AND KUMO SHRINE
KAGEMITSU KUMO
MEMBER OF THE SASAKI FAMILY, THE SHUGO DAIMYO OF OMI
KIYOTSUNA SASAKI

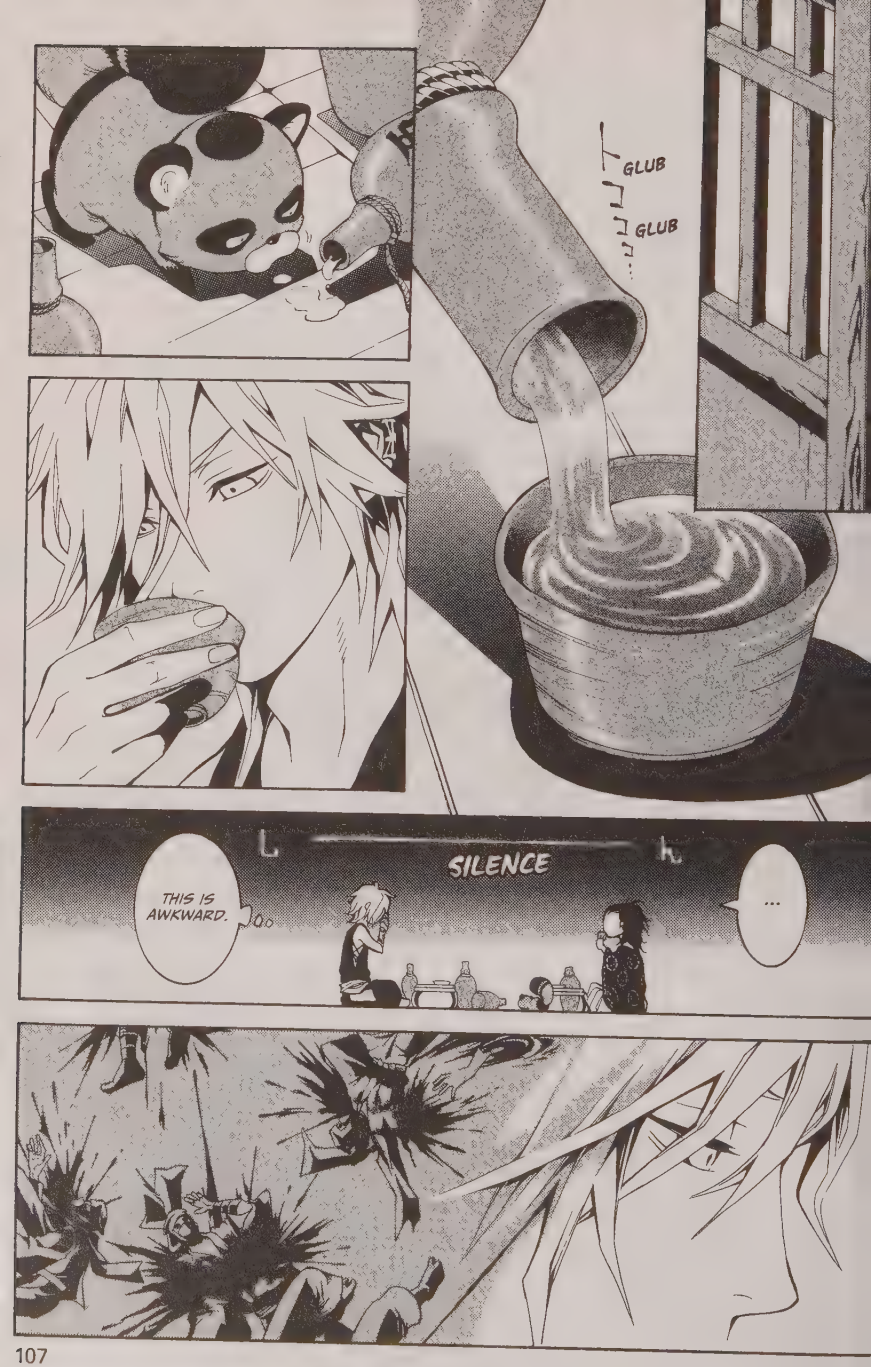

HM? AND WHO IS THAT YOUNG MAN WITH YOU?
I'M TERRIBLY SORRY.
I WAS WORRIED WHEN YOU SUDDENLY DREW THEM ALL TO YOU AND THEN DISAPPEARED.
YIKES, WHAT A MESS!
MEN.
TWITCH
LORD KAGEMITSU. LORD SASAKI.
THANK GOOD-NESS, YOU'RE SAFE!
PHEW
I'M HIRARI.
HER HUSBAND.
WHAT?


SO HE'S REALLY AN ABE?
THAT SWORD... THAT IS INDEED THE ABE FAMILY CREST.
"ABE"?!
WHICH IS WHY...
THAT'S RIGHT. I CAN'T USE IT AT ALL, WHICH IS WHY THEY CALL ME THE "BLACK SHEEP" OF THE ABE FAMILY.
NO ONE HAS ANY REAL EXPECTATIONS FOR ME.
ABE NO HIRARI... I HAVE HEARD ABOUT YOU.
THEY SAY THAT THOUGH YOU ARE A CHILD OF THE ABE FAMILY, YOU HAVE NO SORCERY ABILITIES.
I'LL TAKE WHAT I TRULY WANT WITH MY OWN HAND.


SO, SAME AGE AS ME.
HE'S PROBABLY LYING.
WHAT ARE YOU EVEN DOING HERE? LITTLE CHILDREN SHOULD BE ASLEEP.
WHO ARE YOU CALLING A KID? I'M 20 YEARS OLD!
LISTEN UP, DAMMIT!
THE NAME IS ABE NO HIRARI.
A MEMBER OF THE ABE HOUSEHOLD OF EXORCISTS.
CLUNK
I WON'T ACCEPT THIS.
HOW CAN I HAND OVER BOTAN TO A MAN FROM WHO KNOWS WHERE?
OH, SO YOU WANT TO KNOW WHO I AM?
THERE WILL BE NO HANDING OVER.


JUST BECAUSE I'M AN ABE, DOESN'T MEAN THAT I'M GOING TO FOLLOW THE FAMILY RULES.
AND FIRST OFF, I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO OROCHI IS.
BUT I'VE CHANGED MY MIND.
B-BUT YOU'RE AN ABE, AREN'T YOU?
SO YOU KNOW OF IT AS WELL.
HONESTLY, I'M NOT INTERESTED.
I PRAY YOU DO IT FOR YOUR DUTY'S SAKE.
I'LL DO WHATEVER NEEDS DOING, IF IT'S FOR YOU.

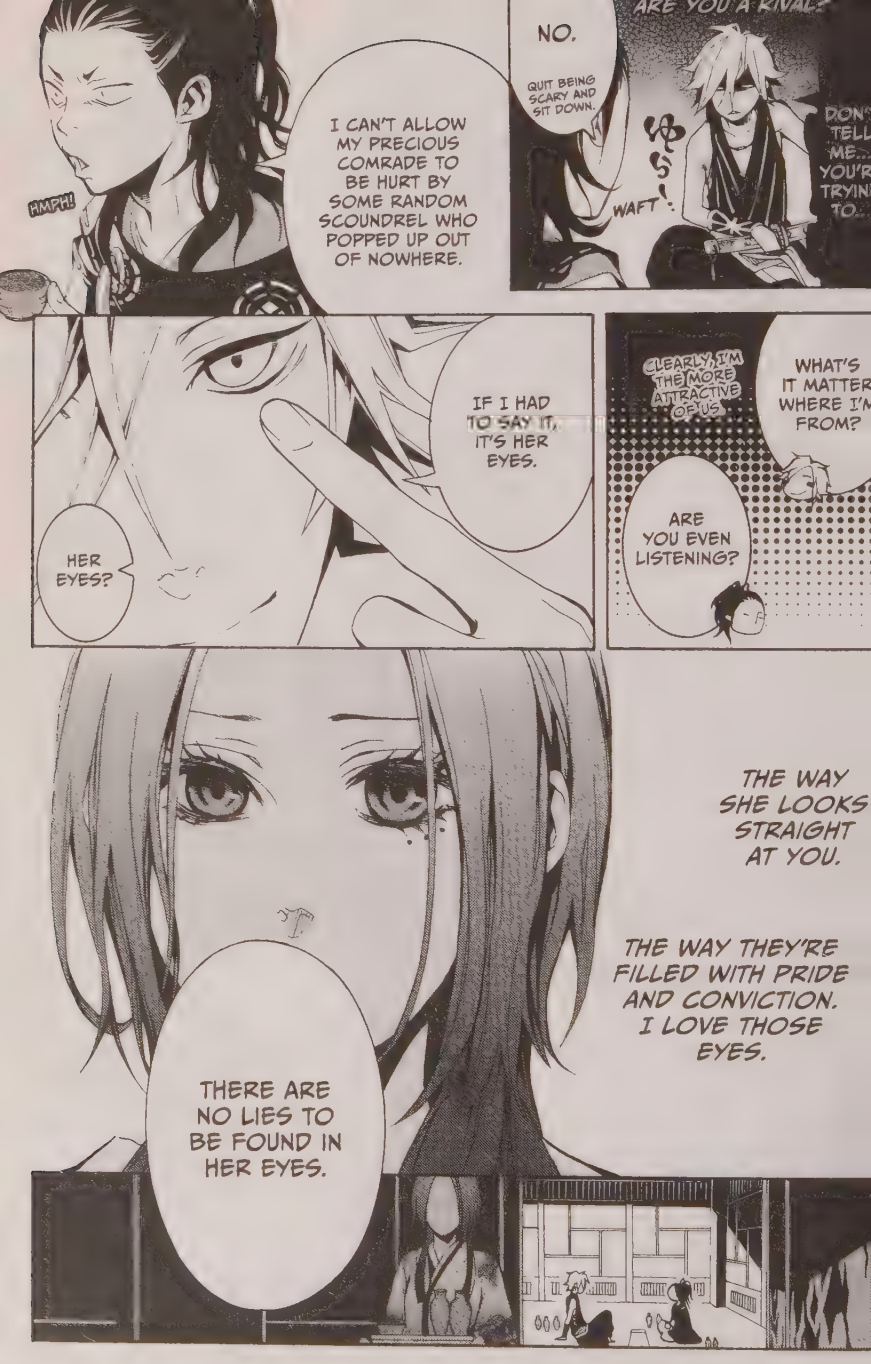

WAY TO RUIN THE MOOD, PIPSQUEAK.
SCREEECH
THAT'S FAR TOO CLOSE! STAY AWAY OR ELSE YOU'LL DIRTY BOTAN!
YANK
IF YOU ARE AN ABE, THEN YOU HAVE THE SAME "DUTY" AS WE DO.
SLUMP
GREAT. NOW BOTAN'S MAD AT ME.
SORRY.
PHOOOOO
WOULD YOU TWO KINDLY BE QUIET?
EXTERMI-NATING OROCHI, RIGHT?
OH, RIGHT.
DUTY?


GLUB
GLUB
SILENCE
THIS IS AWKWARD.
...


WE HAVE ALCOHOL.
THE HOUR IS LATE. PLEASE, STAY THE NIGHT.
MASTER SASAKI!
IF THAT IS THE CASE, THEN YOU ARE WELCOME.
YOU BOYS SPEND SOME TIME TOGETHER.
HEY, BOTAN, GRAB A DRINK!
BEAM
...
BUT IT'S WHAT I LOVE ABOUT HER.
SO COLD.

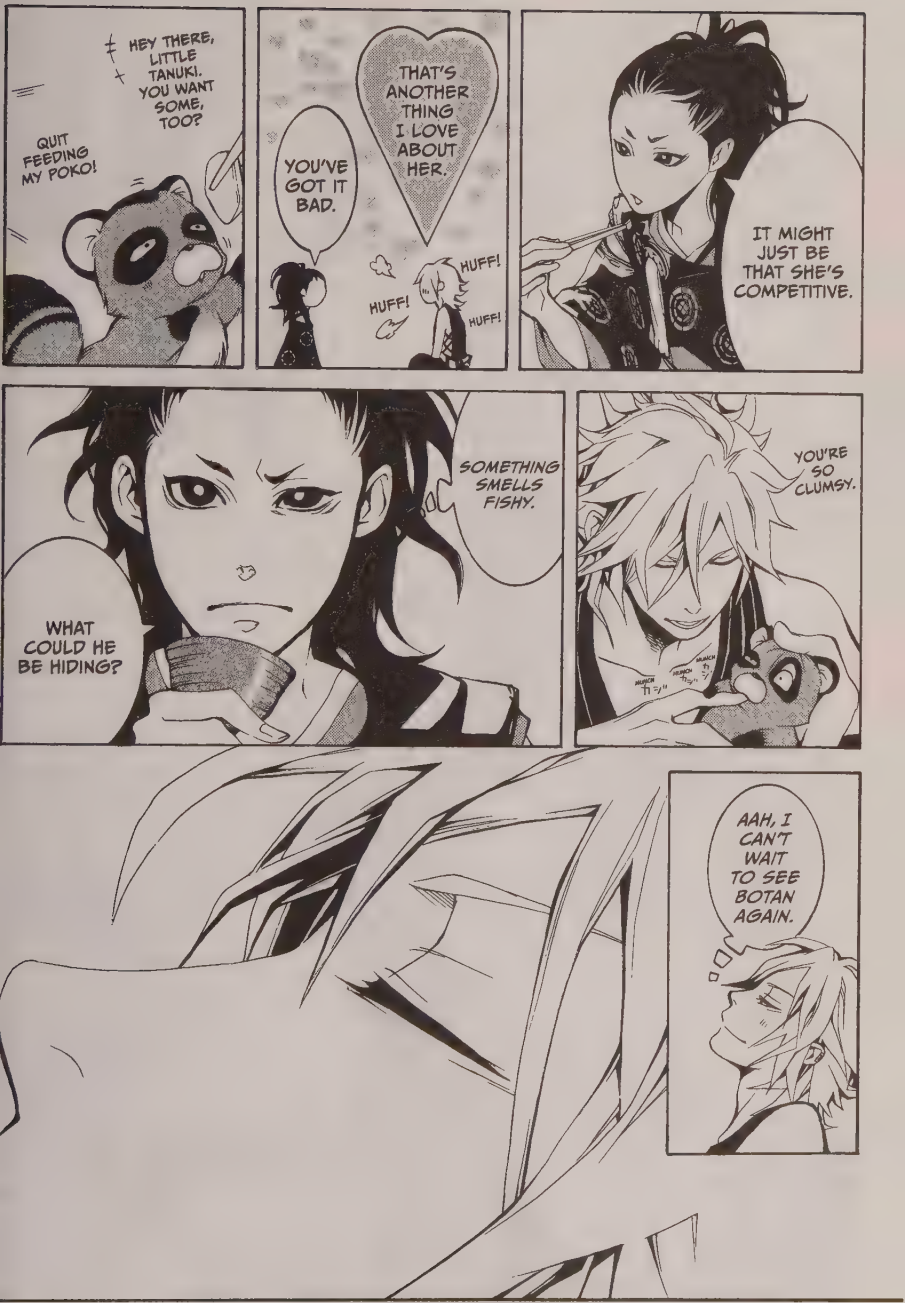

BORN IN ANCIENT TIMES, OROCHI IS A SPIRIT OR A DEMON THAT IS REBORN ONCE EVERY 300 YEARS TO BRING ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION.
A DEVOURER OF ALL THINGS.
HE SHALL SCORCH THE EARTH AND DRAIN THE SEA.
GRE
AVARICE.
PRIDE.
OROCHI IS THE ENEMY OF MANKIND.
HEED THIS.


I FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE YOU DON'T KNOW, EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE AN ABE.
YEAH, I NEVER PAID ATTENTION TO THE STORIES BEFORE.
WHO EXACTLY IS "OROCHI"?
SHWIFF
OROCHI ISN'T A HUMAN. IT'S A MONSTER.
"THE CURSED OROCHI."


HMPH!
I CAN'T ALLOW MY PRECIOUS COMRADE TO BE HURT BY SOME RANDOM SCOUNDREL WHO POPPED UP OUT OF NOWHERE.
NO.
QUIT BEING SCARY AND SIT DOWN.
WAFT
ARE YOU A RIVAL?
DON'T TELL ME... YOU'R TRYIN TO...
IF I HAD TO SAY IT, IT'S HER EYES.
HER EYES?
CLEARLY, I'M THE MORE ATTRACTIVE OF US.
WHAT'S IT MATTER WHERE I'M FROM?
ARE YOU EVEN LISTENING?
THERE ARE NO LIES TO BE FOUND IN HER EYES.
THE WAY SHE LOOKS STRAIGHT AT YOU.
THE WAY THEY'RE FILLED WITH PRIDE AND CONVICTION. I LOVE THOSE EYES.


SO WE MUST "FIND HIM, HUNT HIM DOWN, AND SEAL HIM." HUH?
WOW. THAT'S PRETTY BAD.
DOESN'T HE GET IT?
CURRENTLY, OROCHI HAS BEEN REBORN, HAS OCCUPIED SOMEONE AS A VESSEL, AND IS COMING AFTER US.
IF I MAY ASK, WHAT IS IT YOU FIND SO ATTRACTIVE ABOUT BOTAN?
EITHER WAY, I WON'T LET HIM LAY A FINGER ON BOTAN.


YOU REALLY DON'T REMEMBER, DO YOU?
SPLISH


HEY THERE, LITTLE TANUKI. YOU WANT SOME, TOO?
QUIT FEEDING MY POKO!
THAT'S ANOTHER THING I LOVE ABOUT HER.
YOU'VE GOT IT BAD.
HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!
IT MIGHT JUST BE THAT SHE'S COMPETITIVE.
SOMETHING SMELLS FISHY.
WHAT COULD HE BE HIDING?
YOU'RE SO CLUMSY.
AAH, I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE BOTAN AGAIN.


COULD THAT MAN BE OROCHI'S VESSEL?
IT'S POSSIBLE HE IS A VESSEL. KEEP YOUR GUARD UP.
...
THAT'S RIDI-CULOUS.
IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.
WHO'S THERE?

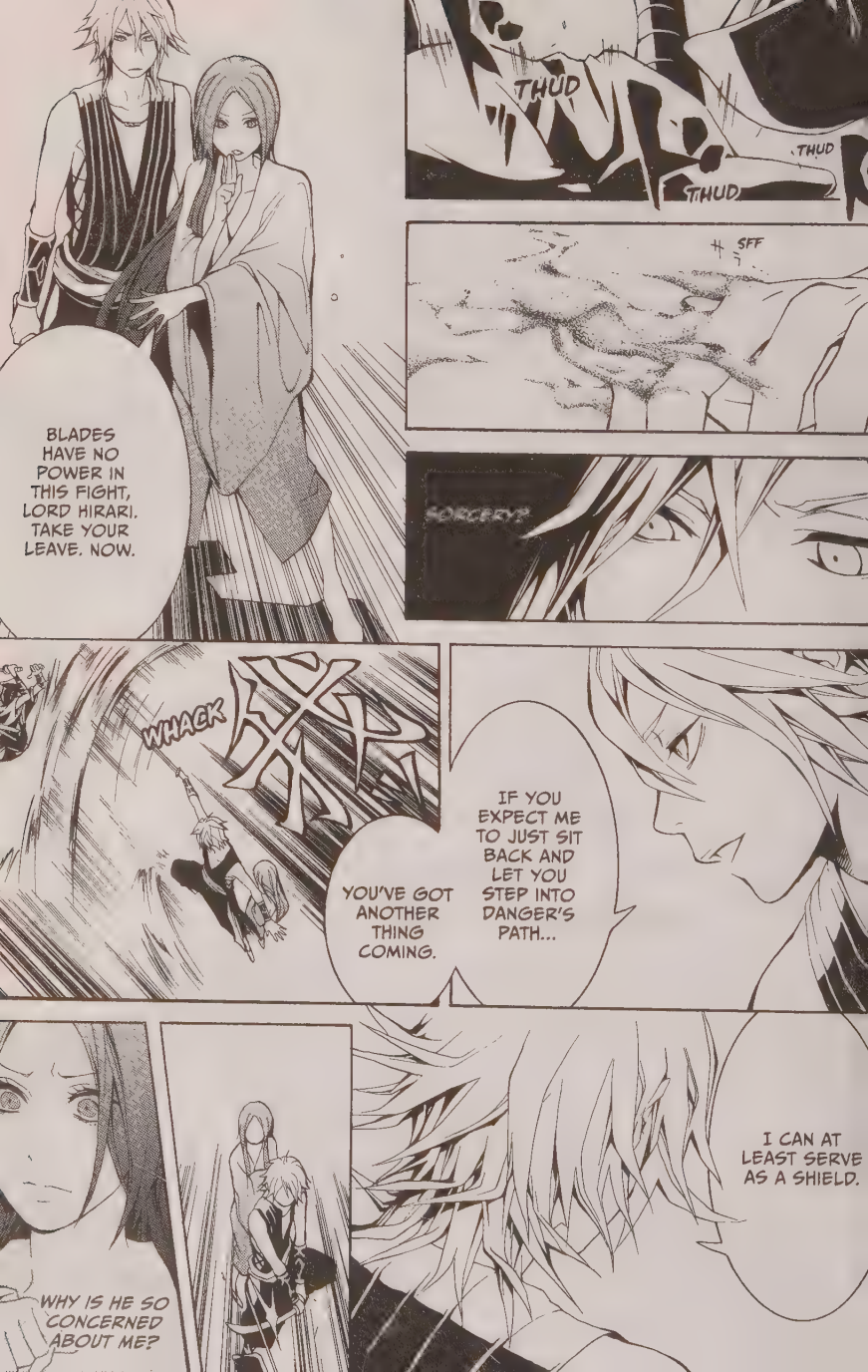

BOTAN, WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THAT YOUNG MAN?
KUMO
KUMO
I SEE.
YOU MEAN LORD HIRARI? HE SEEMS HARMLESS TO ME.
BUT HE'S NOT HELPLESS. ABE BLOOD RUNS THROUGH HIS VEINS.

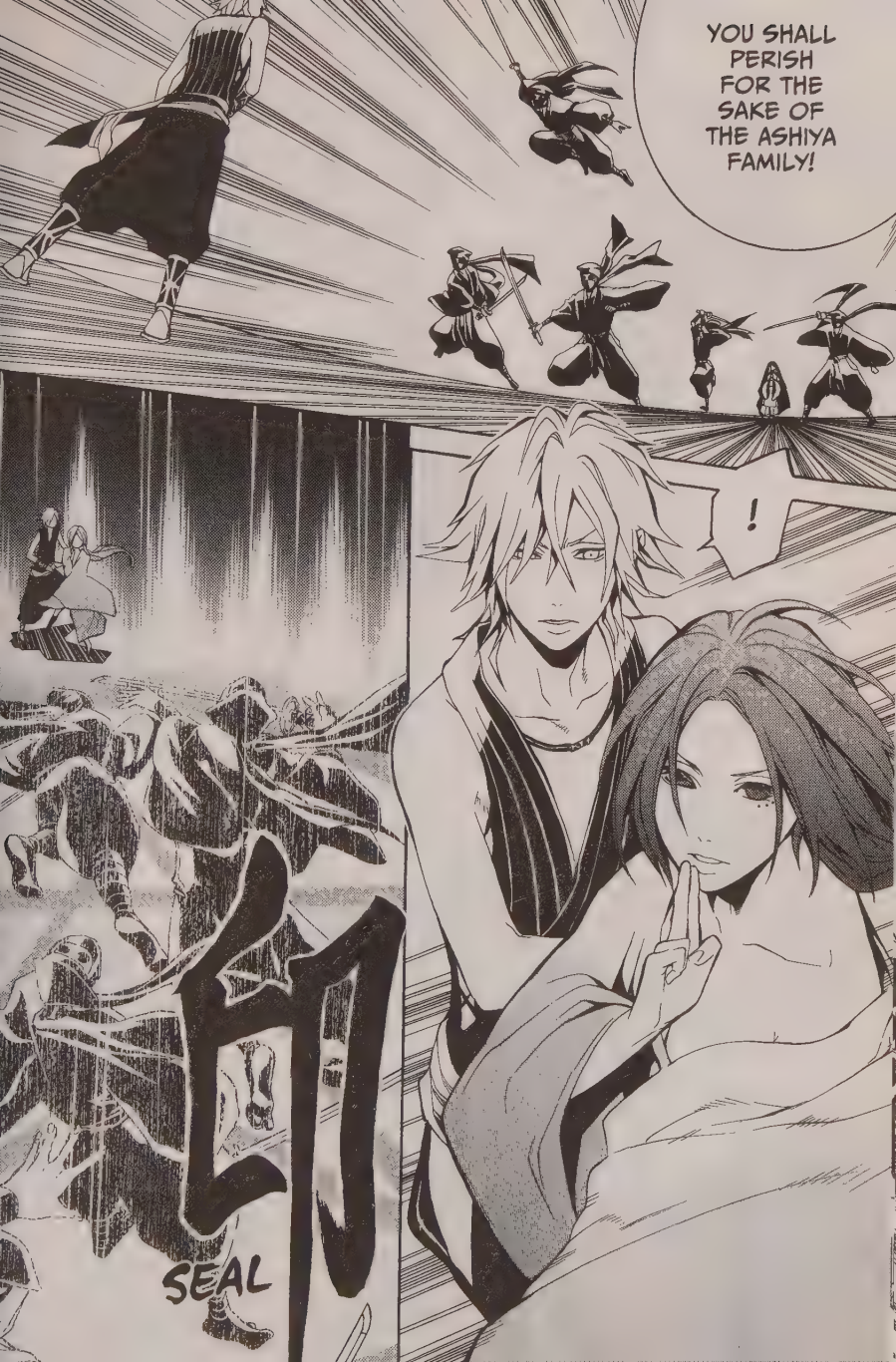

SPLASH
LORD KAGEMITSU! LORD SASAKI!
BOTAN
ASSASSINS
IT HAD TO BE AN AMBUSH FROM OROCHI'S SIDE.
BETWEEN THOSE EARLIER GUYS AND THESE, THEY KNOW OUR EVERY MOVE.
OROCHI HIMSELF MIGHT BE NEARBY.
THIS IS BAD.

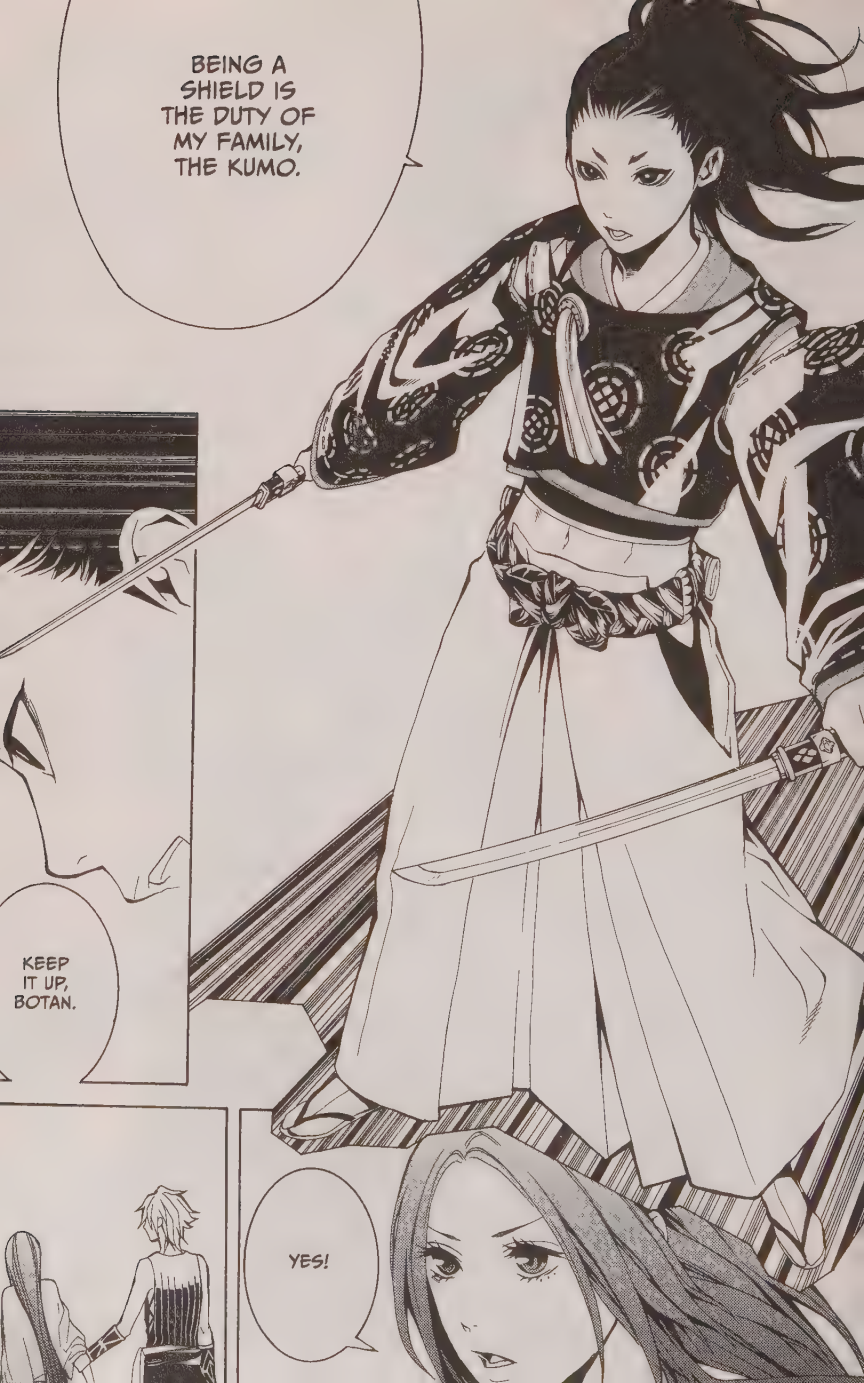

WOOSH
ARROWS?!


THAT IS CORRECT.
YOU ARE PART OF THE ABE FAMILY. I CAN TELL BY YOUR STINK.
ASHIYA...?
SORCERER OF THE ASHIYA FAMILY
MANGETSU ASHIYA
SO THIS IS YOUR MAGIC'S DOING.
PRETTY REVOLTING TRICK.
THE NOBLE FAMILY OF SORCERERS, THE ASHIYA FAMILY, HAVE SIDED WITH OROCHI?
HIRARI, I THOUGHT YOU HAD NO INTEREST WHEN IT CAME TO YOUR DUTY. WHAT TERRIBLE LUCK.

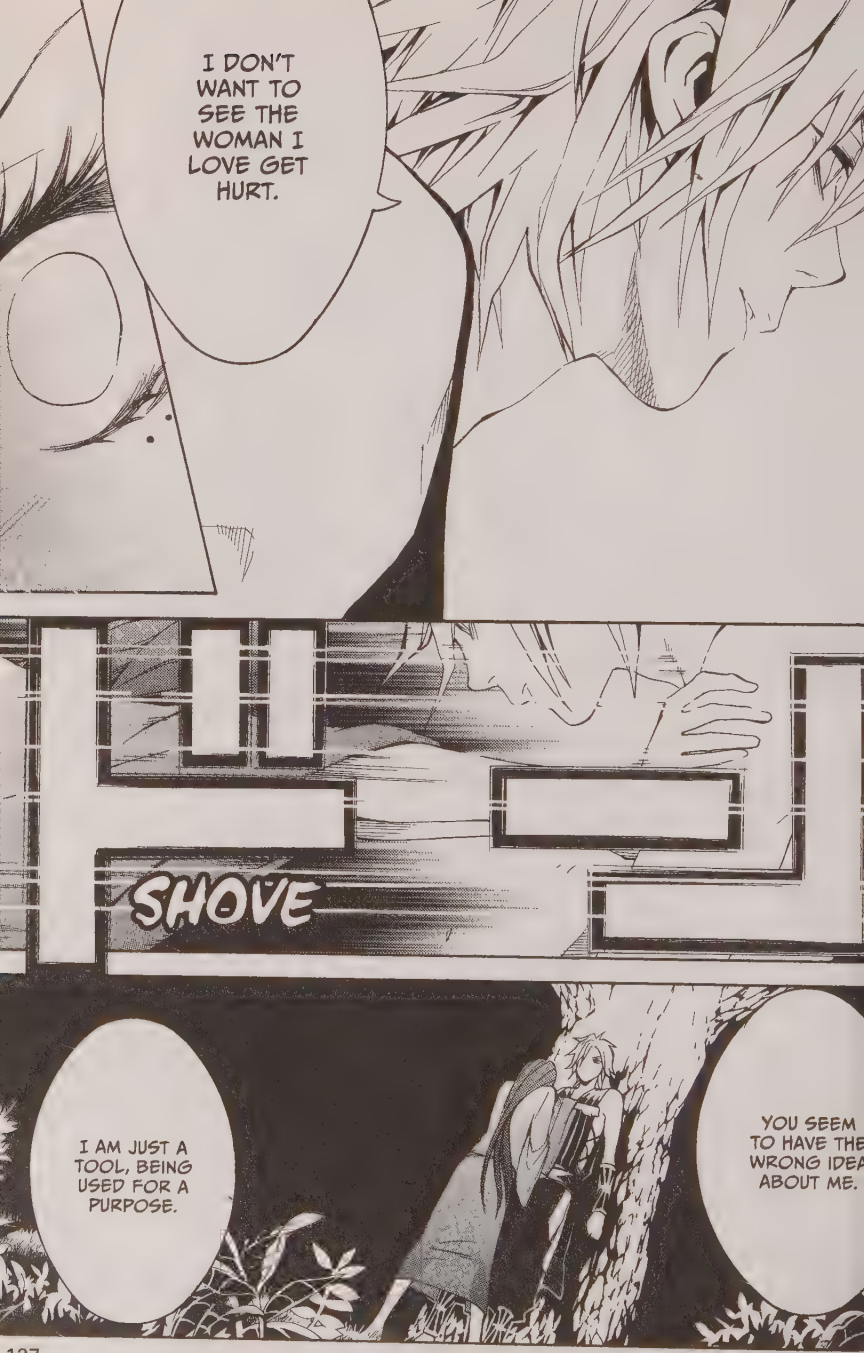

...
STRANGE. IT HAD NO EFFECT.
ARE THESE GUYS THE LIVING DEAD?
斬
SLICE


BLADES HAVE NO POWER IN THIS FIGHT, LORD HIRARI. TAKE YOUR LEAVE. NOW.
THUD
THUD
THUD
SFF
SORCERY?
WHACK
YOU'VE GOT ANOTHER THING COMING.
IF YOU EXPECT ME TO JUST SIT BACK AND LET YOU STEP INTO DANGER'S PATH...
I CAN AT LEAST SERVE AS A SHIELD.
WHY IS HE SO CONCERNED ABOUT ME?


YOU SHALL PERISH FOR THE SAKE OF THE ASHIYA FAMILY!
!
SEAL

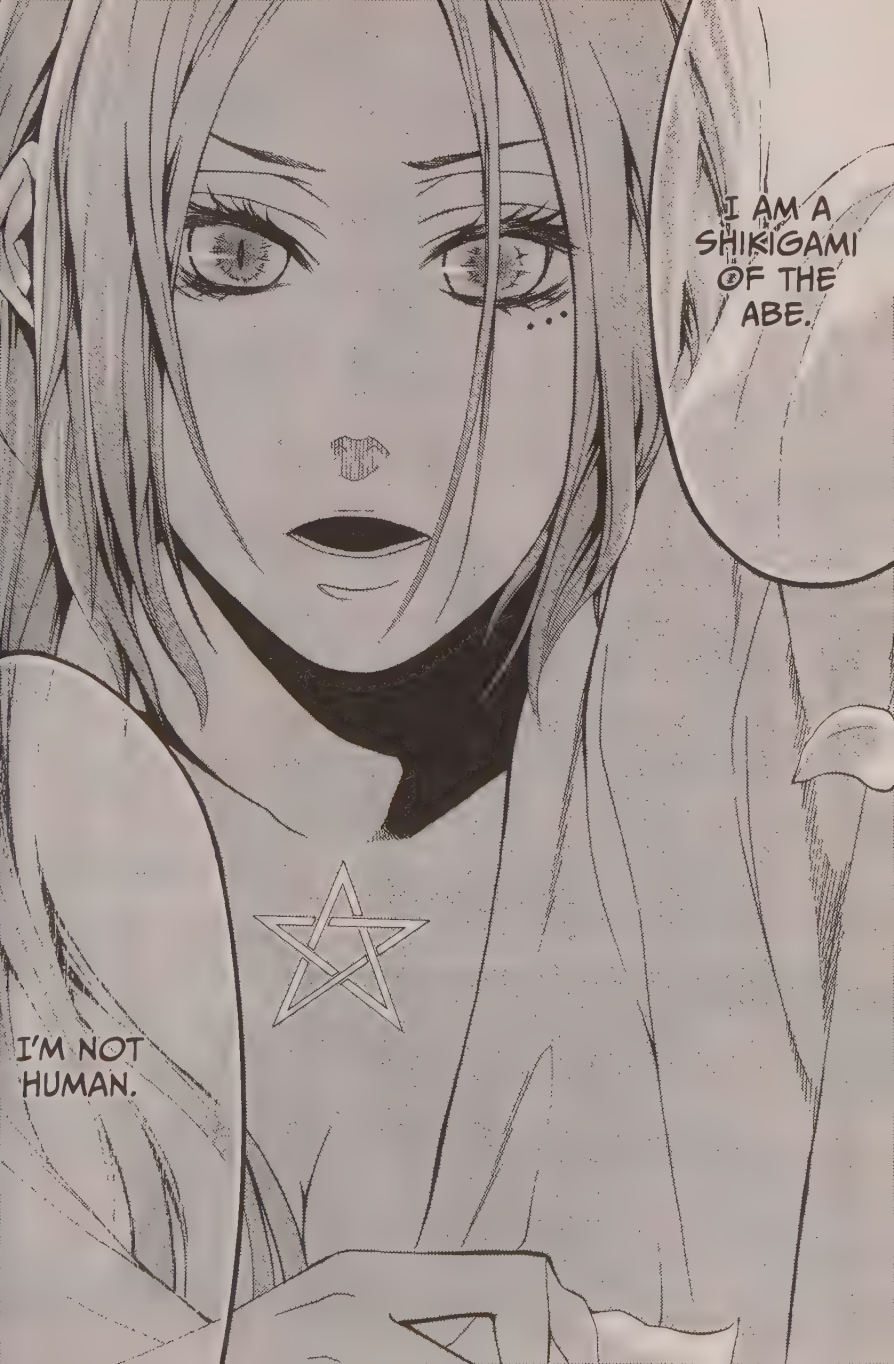

BEING A SHIELD IS THE DUTY OF MY FAMILY, THE KUMO.
KEEP IT UP, BOTAN.
YES!


LORD HIRARI!
TUG
STAY OUT OF THIS.
HALF-WITS WHO CAN'T EVEN USE SORCERY HAVE NO PLACE HERE.
THIS ISN'T A GAME.
I DON'T CARE IF YOU WANT TO LOOK COOL, BUT DON'T GET IN OUR WAY.


I DON'T WANT TO SEE THE WOMAN I LOVE GET HURT.
SHOVE
I AM JUST A TOOL, BEING USED FOR A PURPOSE.
YOU SEEM TO HAVE THE WRONG IDEA ABOUT ME.

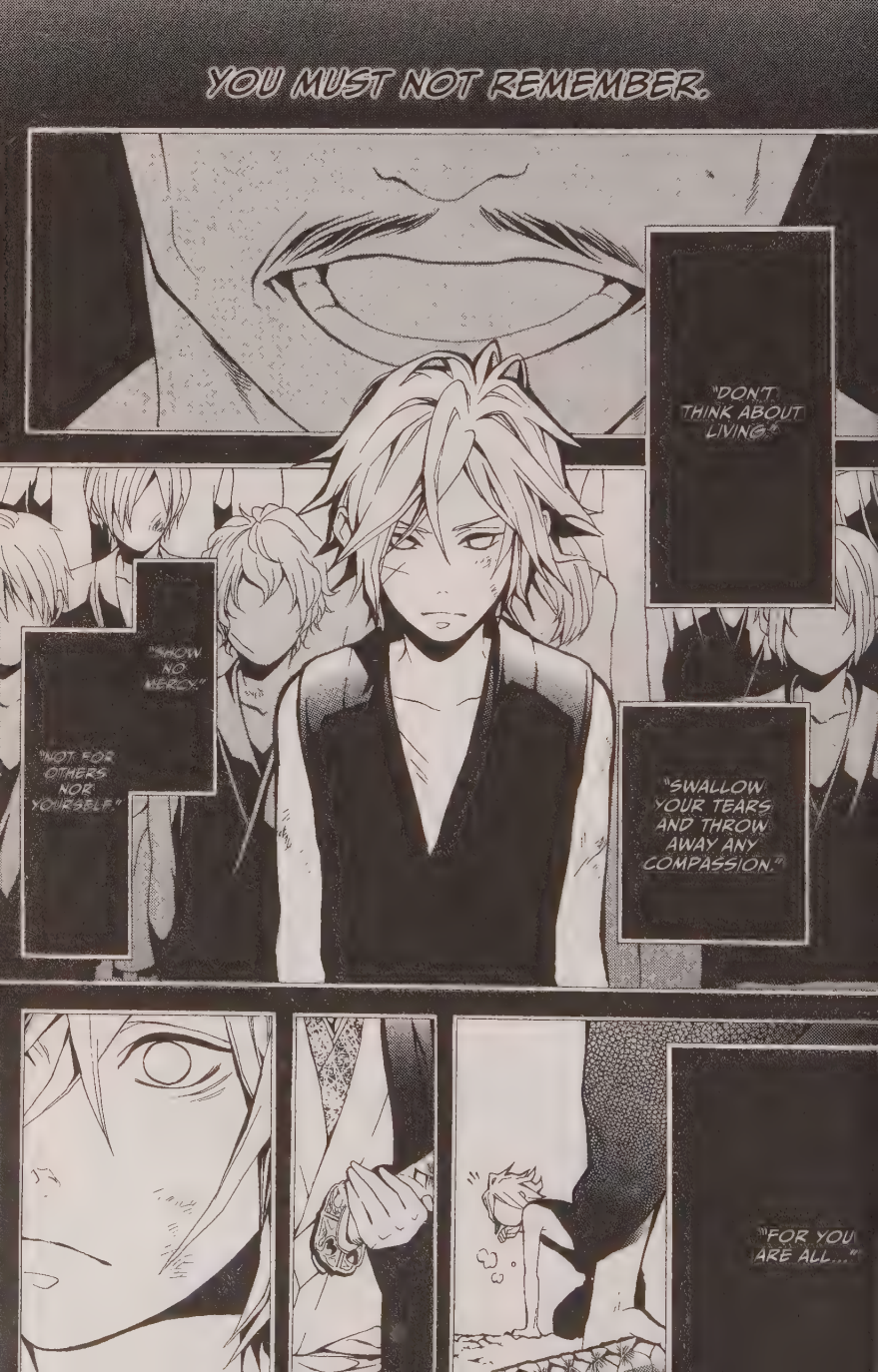

PLEASE UNHAND ME.
DON'T GO.
YOU HAVE NO REASON TO STOP ME!
I WON'T LET YOU GO.
NO!
LET GO OF ME!
BOTAN, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!


I'M JUST A MONSTER CREATED BY YOUR FATHER.
I FEEL NO PAIN.
MINE IS AN EXISTENCE WITHOUT LOVE.
YOU HOPING THAT HOGWASH WILL MAKE ME GIVE UP ON YOU?
IT IS NOT HOGWA—

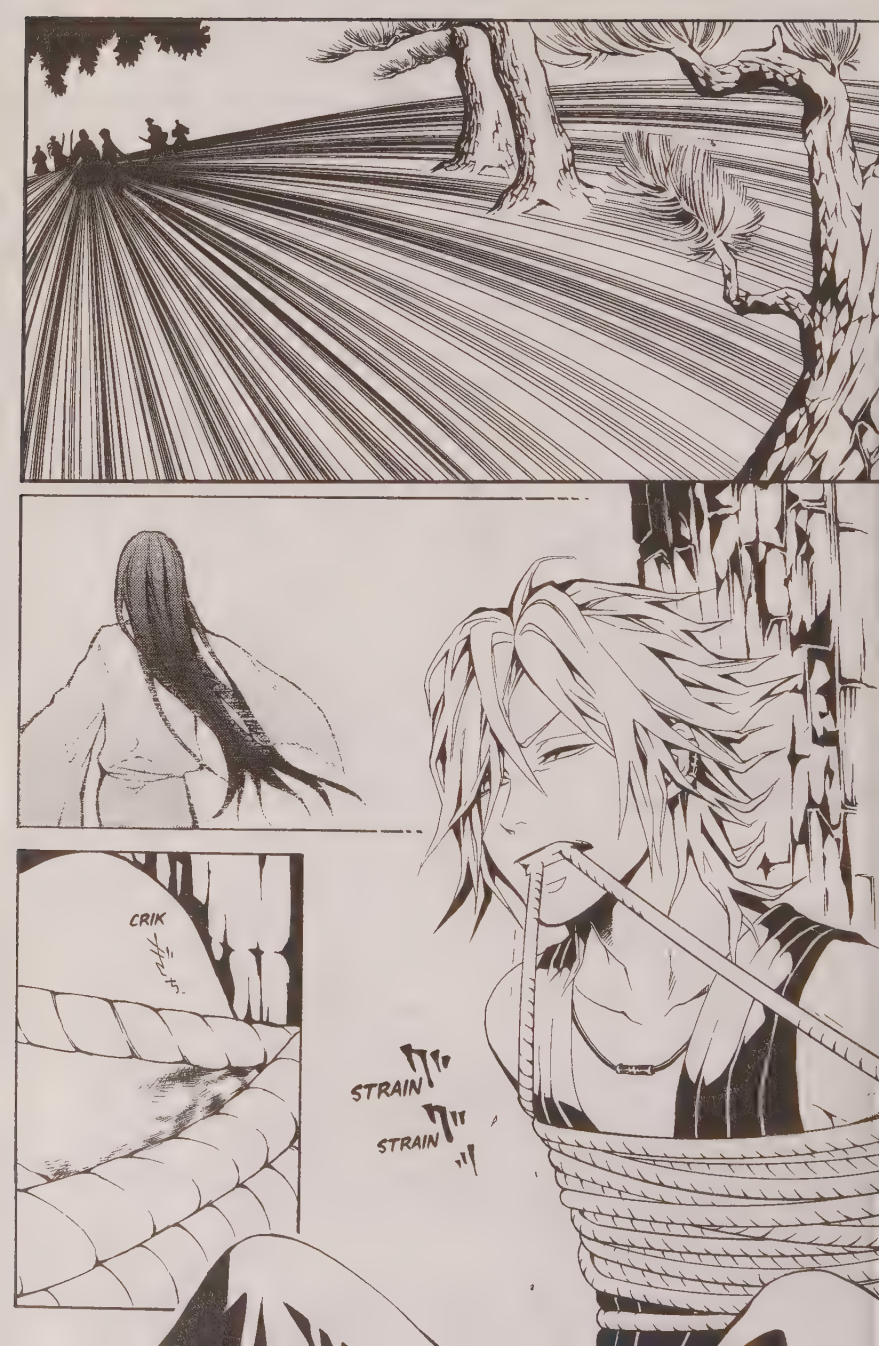

I AM A SHIKIGAMI OF THE ABE.
I'M NOT HUMAN.

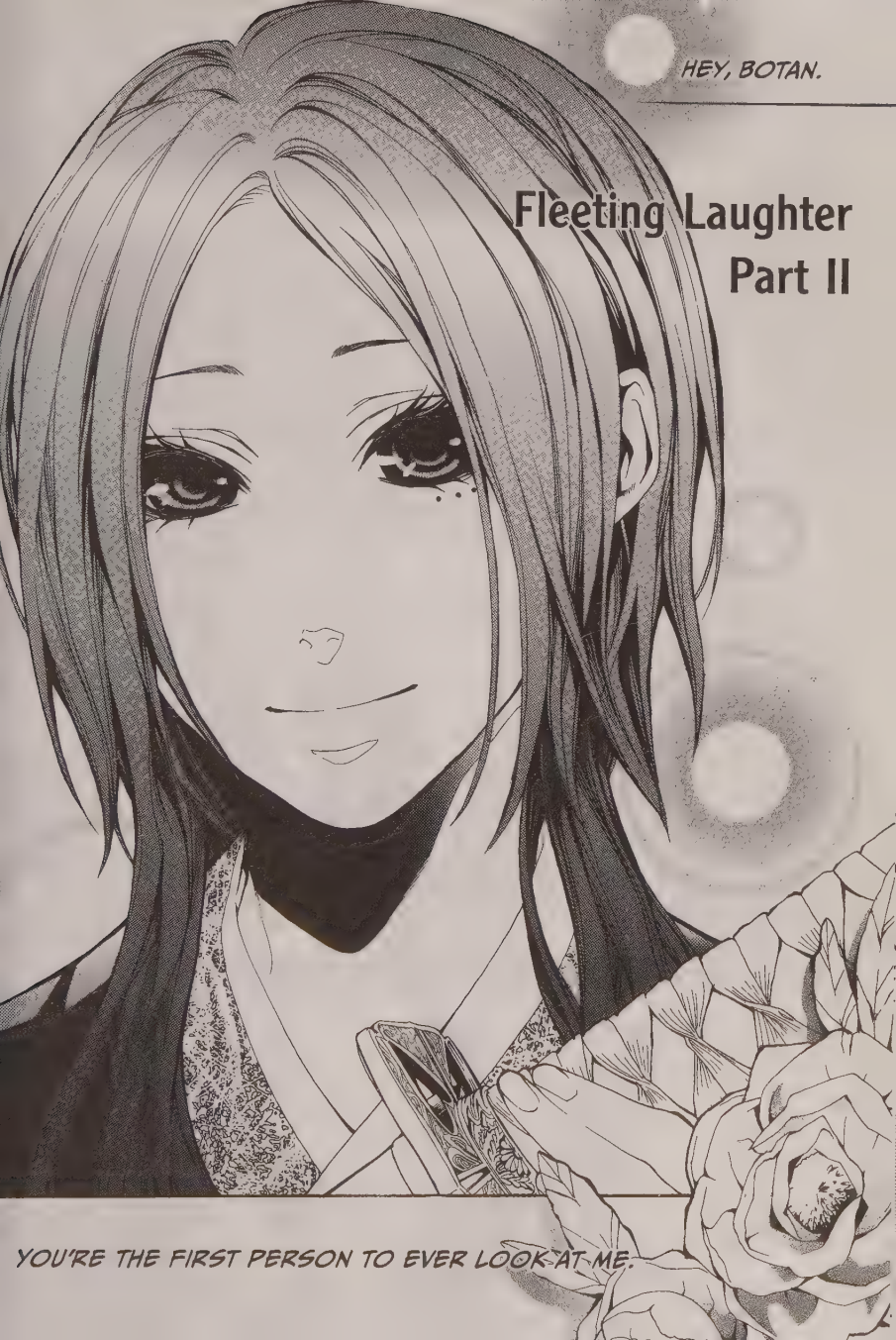

BOTAN, WAIT! BOOOTAAAAN!
BOTAN?
HEY! BOTAN!
LORD SASAKI, PLEASE DEAL WIT HIM!
DON'T PAY HIM TOO MUCH MIND.
I KNOW.
DRIVES ME CRAZY.
THA MAN
IT WAS A BURNING HOT SUMMER DAY.


ぎゅっ
TUG
WHAP


YOU MUST NOT REMEMBER.
"DON'T THINK ABOUT LIVING."
"SHOW NO MERCY."
"NOT FOR OTHERS NOR YOURSELF."
"SWALLOW YOUR TEARS AND THROW AWAY ANY COMPASSION."
"FOR YOU ARE ALL..."

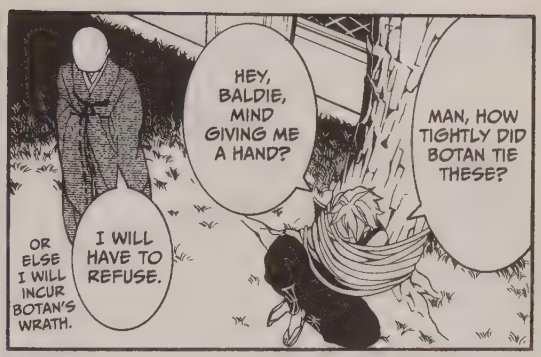

BENEATH A CLOUDY SKY...
IT WAS A FLEETING TALE.

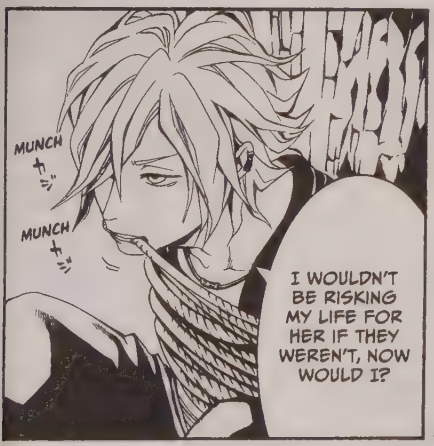

CRIK
STRAIN
STRAIN

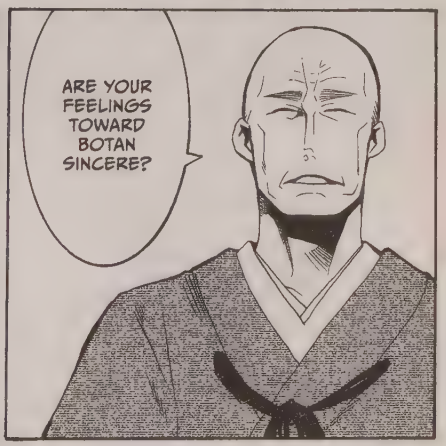

HEY, BOTAN.
Fleeting Laughter
Part II
YOU'RE THE FIRST PERSON TO EVER LOOK AT ME.


SHE IS A SPECIAL SHIKIGAMI A SPIRIT SUMMONED BY ALL THE SORCERER OF THE ABE
MONO
HEI
BOTAN IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN SEAL AWAY OROCHI.
IT TAKES TIME TO RECITE THE INCANTATION, WHICH IS WHEN THOSE OF THE KUMO FAMILY PROTECT HER AS A SHIELD.
THERE IS NO ROOM FOR YOU TO INTRUDE.
YOU TELLING ME TO GIVE UP? THINK AGAIN.

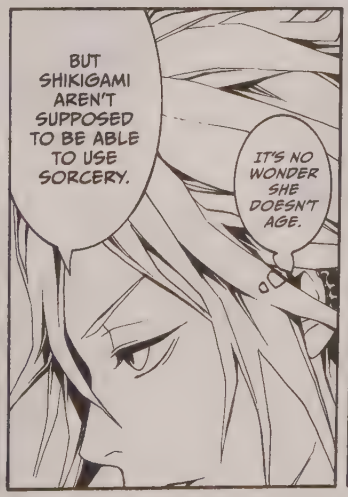

...
DAMMIT!

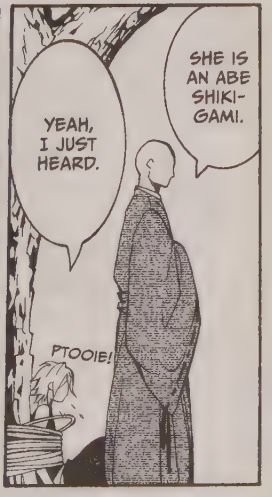

HEY, BALDIE, MIND GIVING ME A HAND?
MAN, HOW TIGHTLY DID BOTAN TIE THESE?
I WILL HAVE TO REFUSE.
OR ELSE I WILL INCUR BOTAN'S WRATH.


MUNCH
MUNCH
I WOULDN'T BE RISKING MY LIFE FOR HER IF THEY WEREN'T, NOW WOULD I?

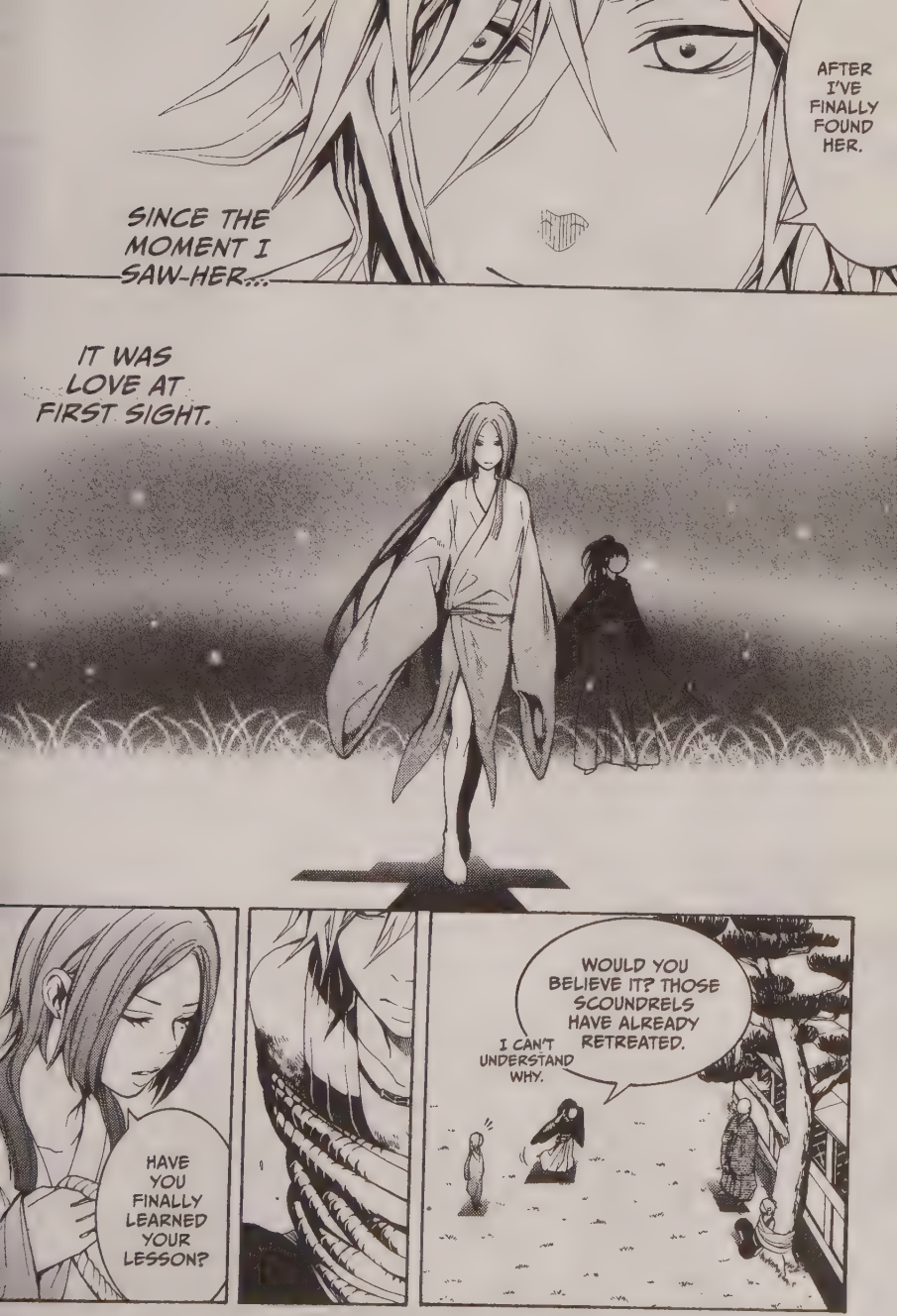

ARE YOUR FEELINGS TOWARD BOTAN SINCERE?

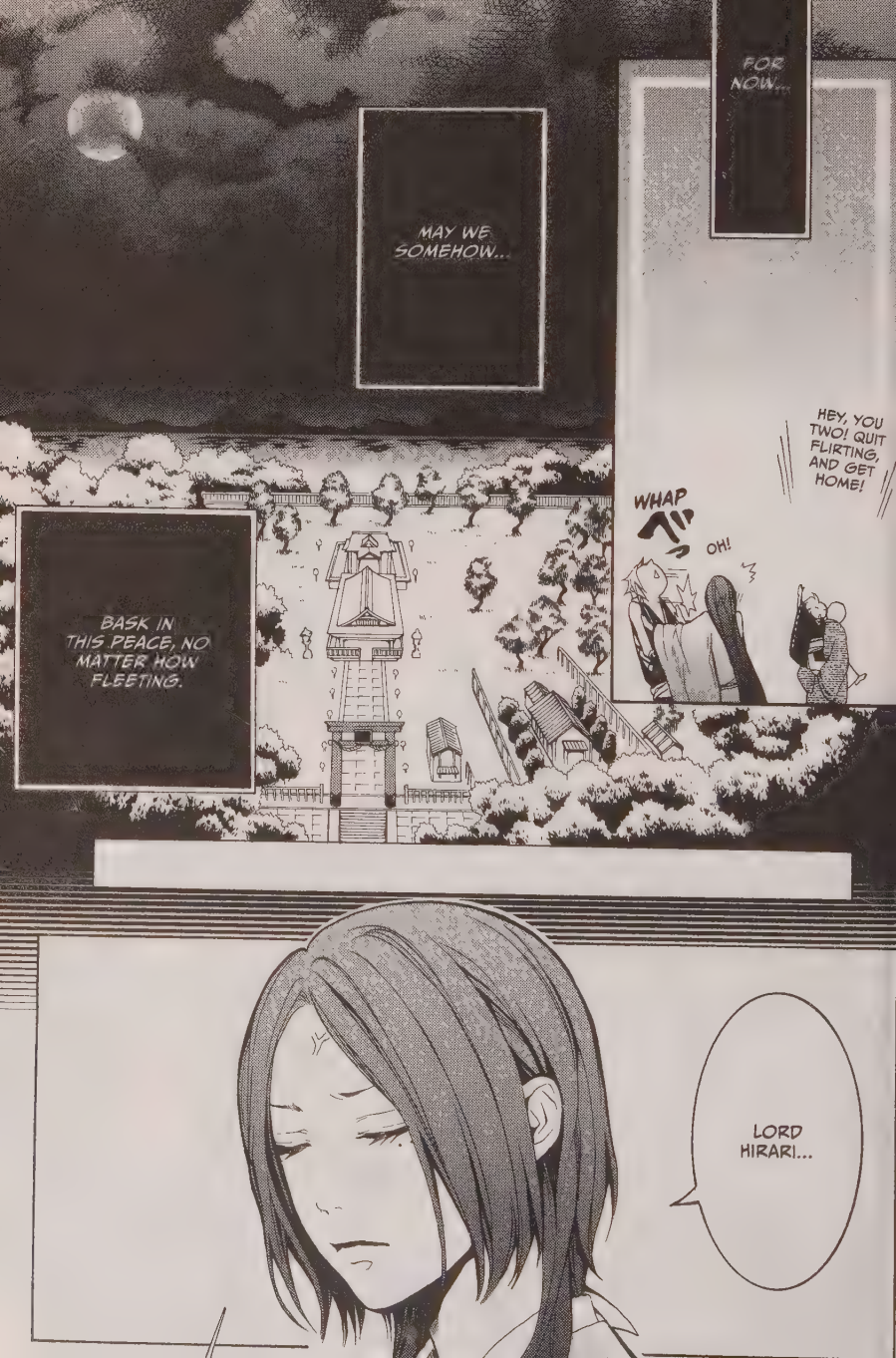

IT WAS NO REGULAR RITUAL THAT BROUGHT HER.

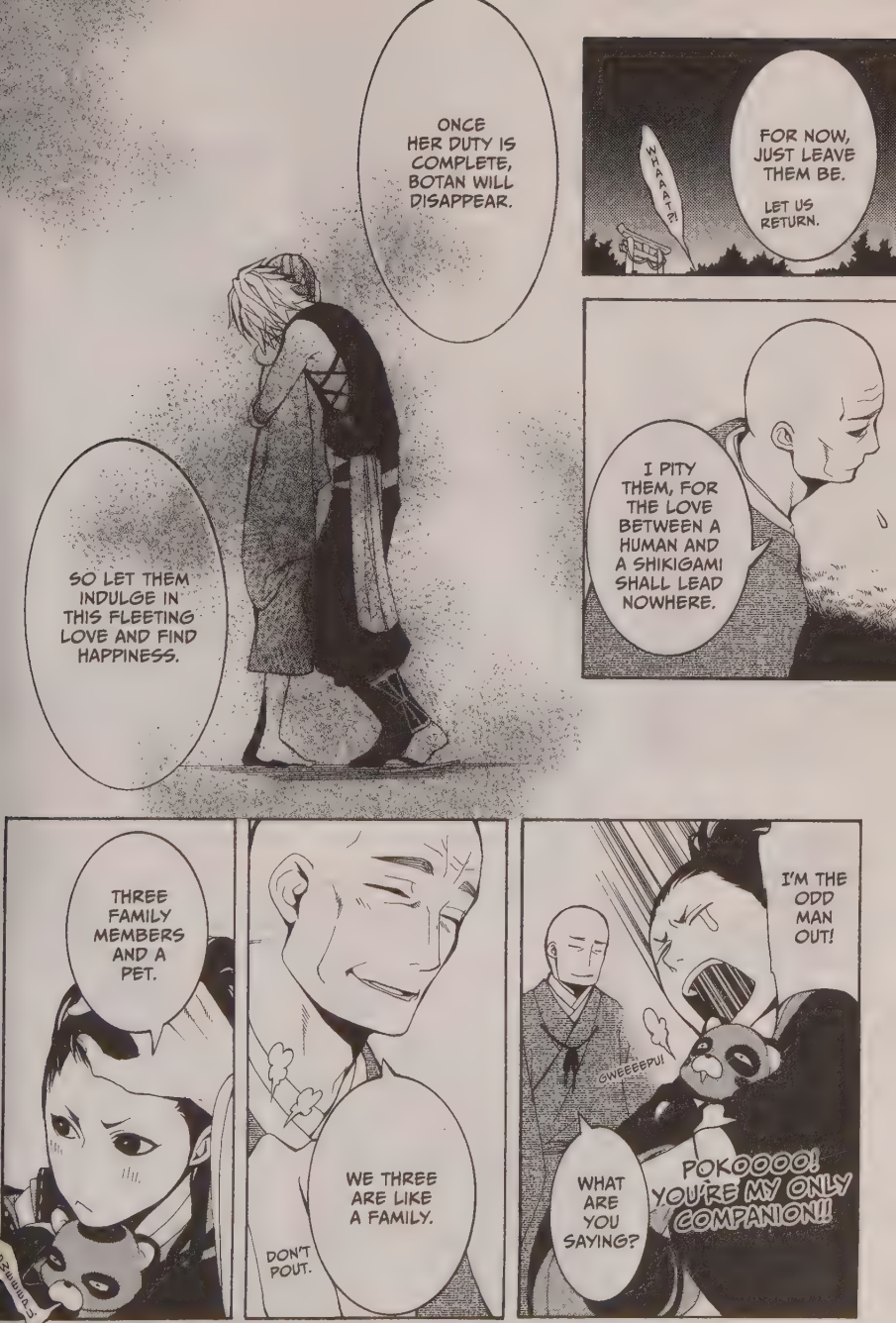

BUT SHIKIGAMI AREN'T SUPPOSED TO BE ABLE TO USE SORCERY.
IT'S NO WONDER SHE DOESN'T AGE.

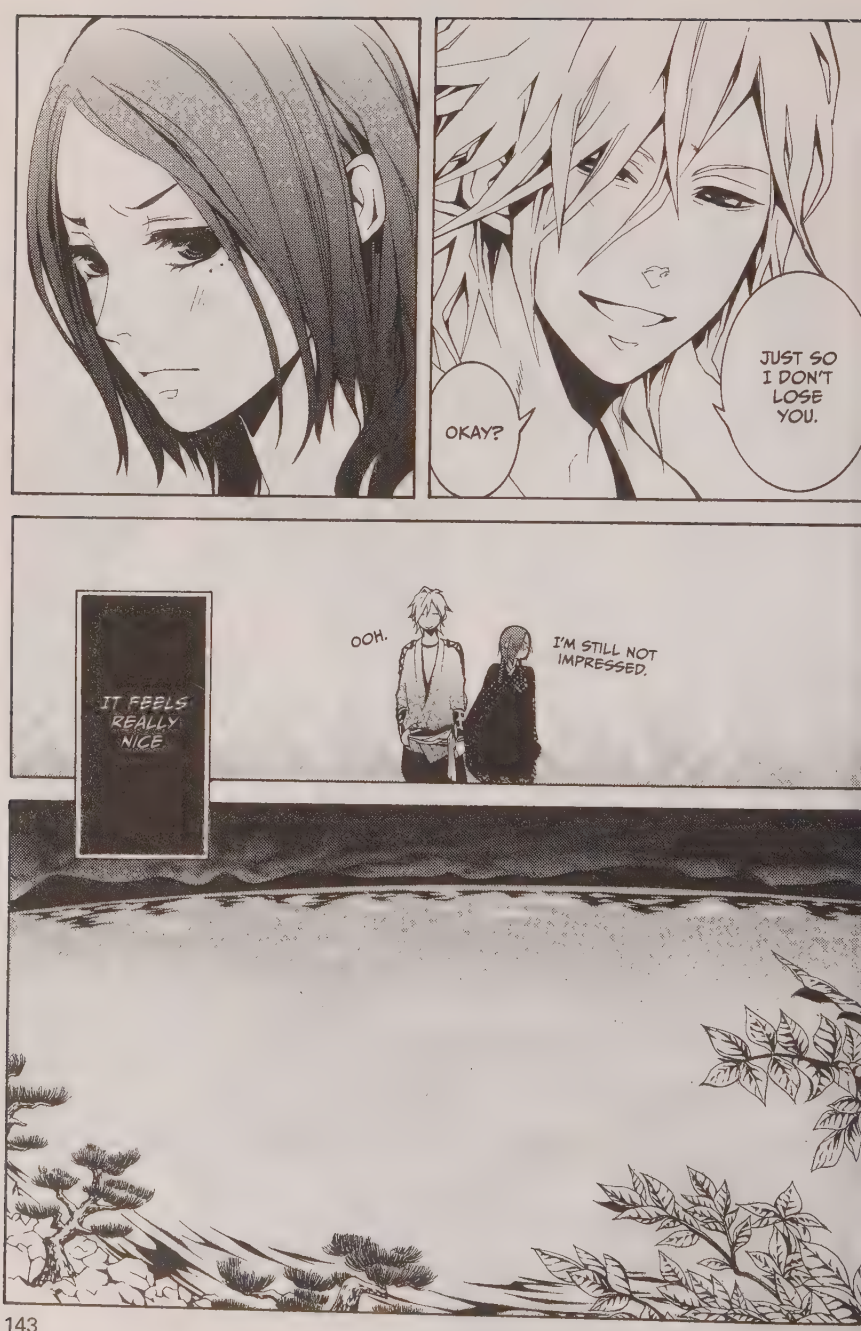

SHE IS AN ABE SHIKI-GAMI.
YEAH, I JUST HEARD.
PTOOIE!


PLEASE DON'T WORRY ME LIKE THAT.
STOP THIS AT ONCE! IT'S EMBAR-RASSING!
SQUEEEEZE
SQUEEZE
?
MY TIME IS LIMITED.
LIFE IS SHORT, SO WHAT'S THE HARM IN SPEAKING OF LOVE?
SHOULD WE REALLY JUST LET HIM DO AS HE PLEASES?
HMMM.
WHAT DID HE EVEN COME HERE FOR?
WHY IS HE SO UNHURRIED?
THAT MAN FROM ASHIYA... HE RETREATED WITH HARDLY A FIGHT.


AFTER I'VE FINALLY FOUND HER.
SINCE THE MOMENT I SAW HER...
IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.
WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT? THOSE SCOUNDRELS HAVE ALREADY RETREATED.
I CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY.
HAVE YOU FINALLY LEARNED YOUR LESSON?


FOR NOW...
MAY WE SOMEHOW...
HEY, YOU TWO! QUIT FLIRTING, AND GET HOME!
WHAP
OH!
BASK IN THIS PEACE, NO MATTER HOW FLEETING.
LORD HIRARI...

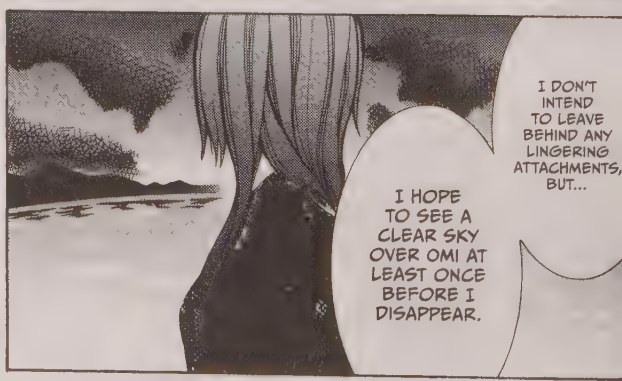

ONCE HER DUTY IS COMPLETE, BOTAN WILL DISAPPEAR.
SO LET THEM INDULGE IN THIS FLEETING LOVE AND FIND HAPPINESS.
FOR NOW, JUST LEAVE THEM BE.
LET US RETURN.
I PITY THEM, FOR THE LOVE BETWEEN A HUMAN AND A SHIKIGAMI SHALL LEAD NOWHERE.
THREE FAMILY MEMBERS AND A PET.
WE THREE ARE LIKE A FAMILY.
DON'T POUT.
I'M THE ODD MAN OUT!
GWEEEEPU!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
POKOOOO! YOU'RE MY ONLY COMPANION!!

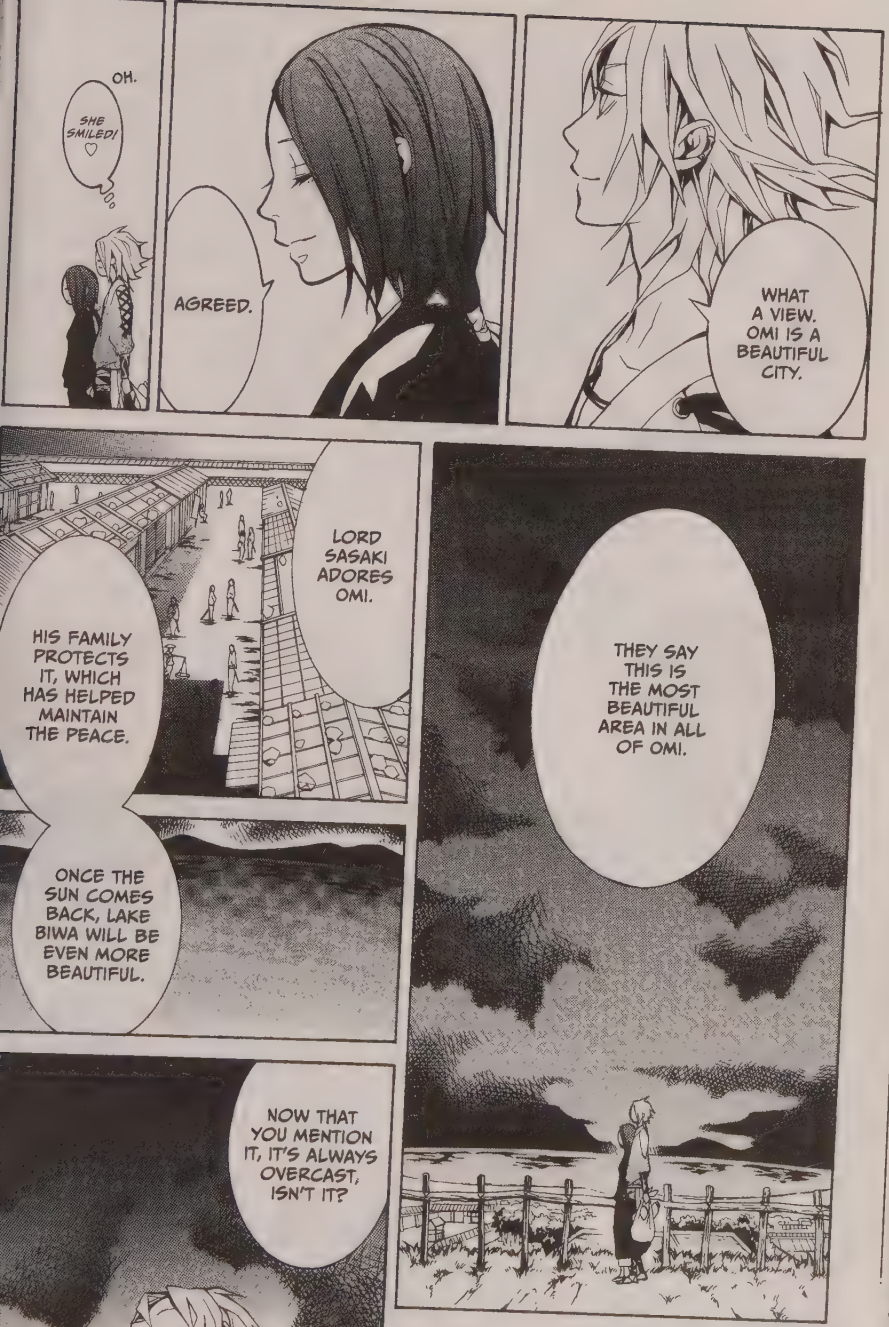

JUST SO I DON'T LOSE YOU.
OKAY?
I'M STILL NOT IMPRESSED.
OOH.
IT FEELS REALLY NICE.

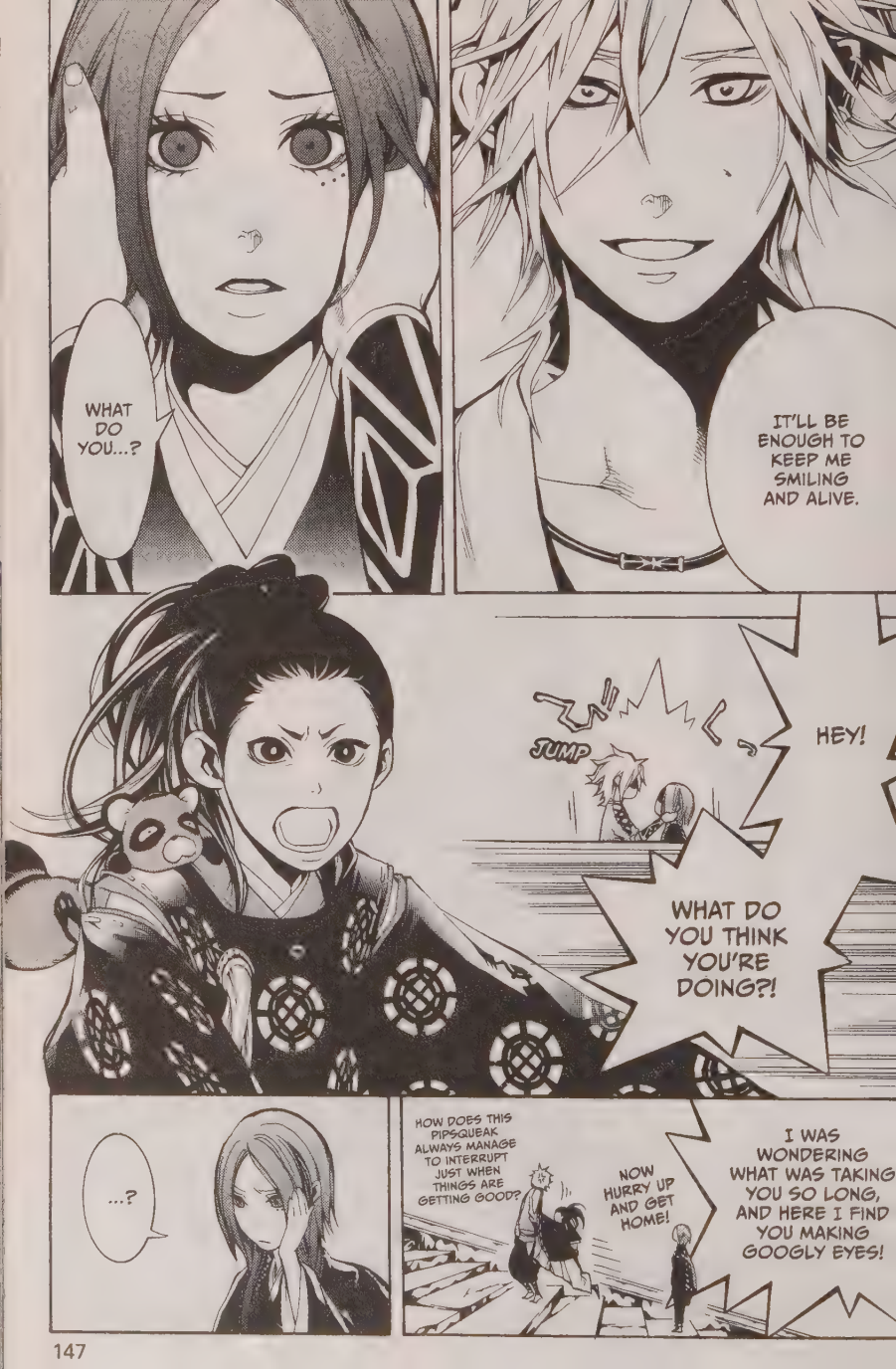

LET ME IN, TOO!
AH, THEY'RE AT IT AGAIN.
HRUMPH!
GYAAAH! MY EYE!!!
YOU ARE IN THE WAY.
HOW CRUEL! BUT I ALSO LOVE THAT ABOUT YOU!
OOPS, MY HAND SUDDENLY SLIPPED.
CLOSE
HM? I TOLD YOU, YOU CAN JUST CALL ME HIRARI.
SEEING AS I'M YOUR HUSBAND. ♡
JAB
ROLL
ROLL
ROLL
GOODNESS GRACIOUS.
OUR HOME HAS BECOME SO NOISY.
TAKE THAT!
SMACK
OUT SHOPPING.
I'LL COME, TOO!
NO, THANK YOU.
WHERE YA GOING, BOTAN?
AFTER THAT ATTACK, I TOOK TO STAYING OVER AT THE KUMO SHRINE...
BUT THERE HASN'T BEEN ANY MOVEMENT FROM OROCHI, AND THINGS HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY PEACEFUL.


THAT'S OROCHI'S DOING.
THERE IS A GREAT TREE IN THE CENTER OF LAKE BIWA
LONG AGO, OROCHI WAS INJURED THERE AND CAST A CURSE.
THAT CURSE IS WHAT ALLOWED OROCHI TO BE REBORN HERE OVER AND OVER AGAIN, AND THE SKY DARKENS IN RESONANCE WITH HIS SOUL.

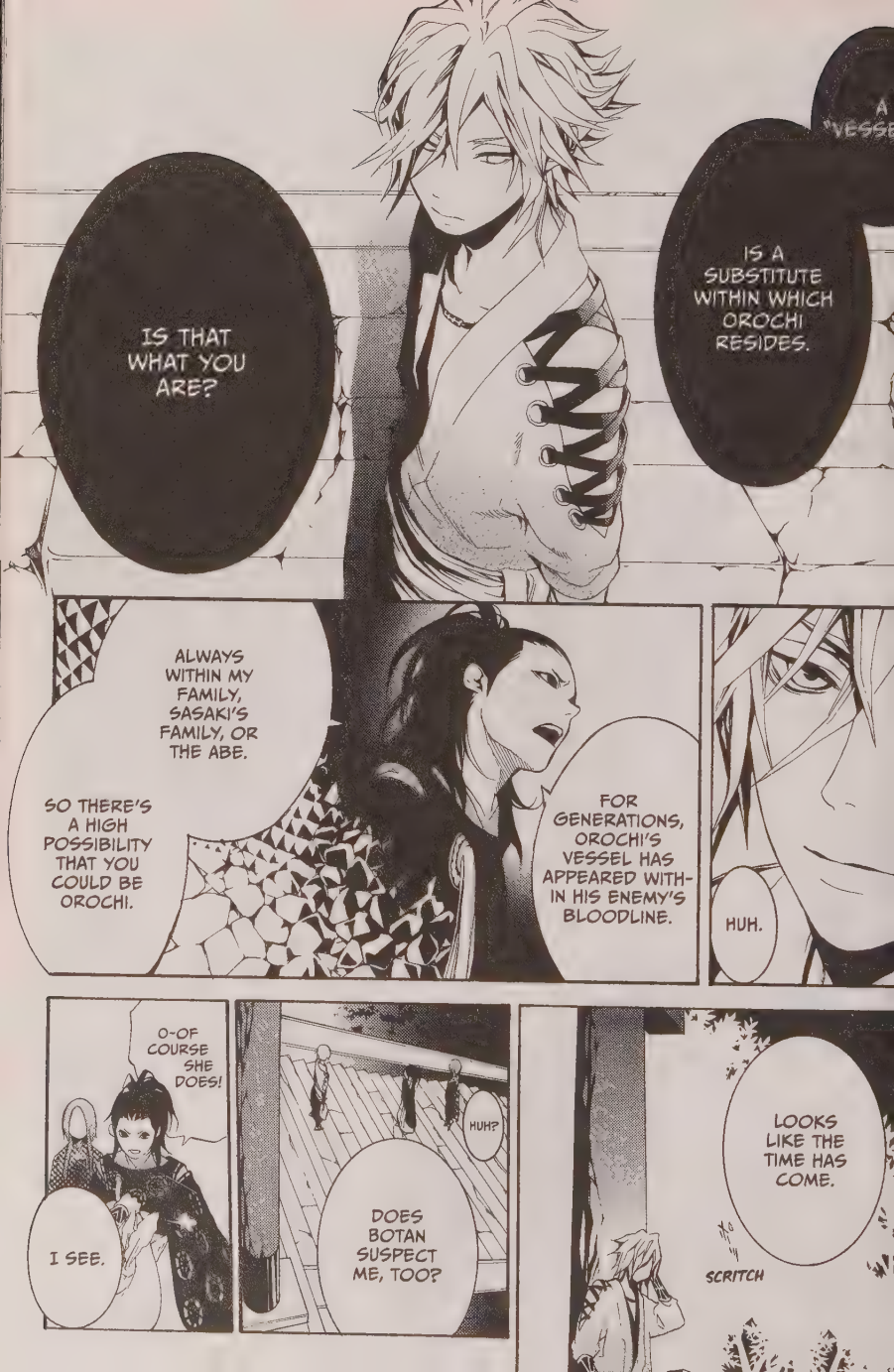

SQUEEZE
キュッ!!

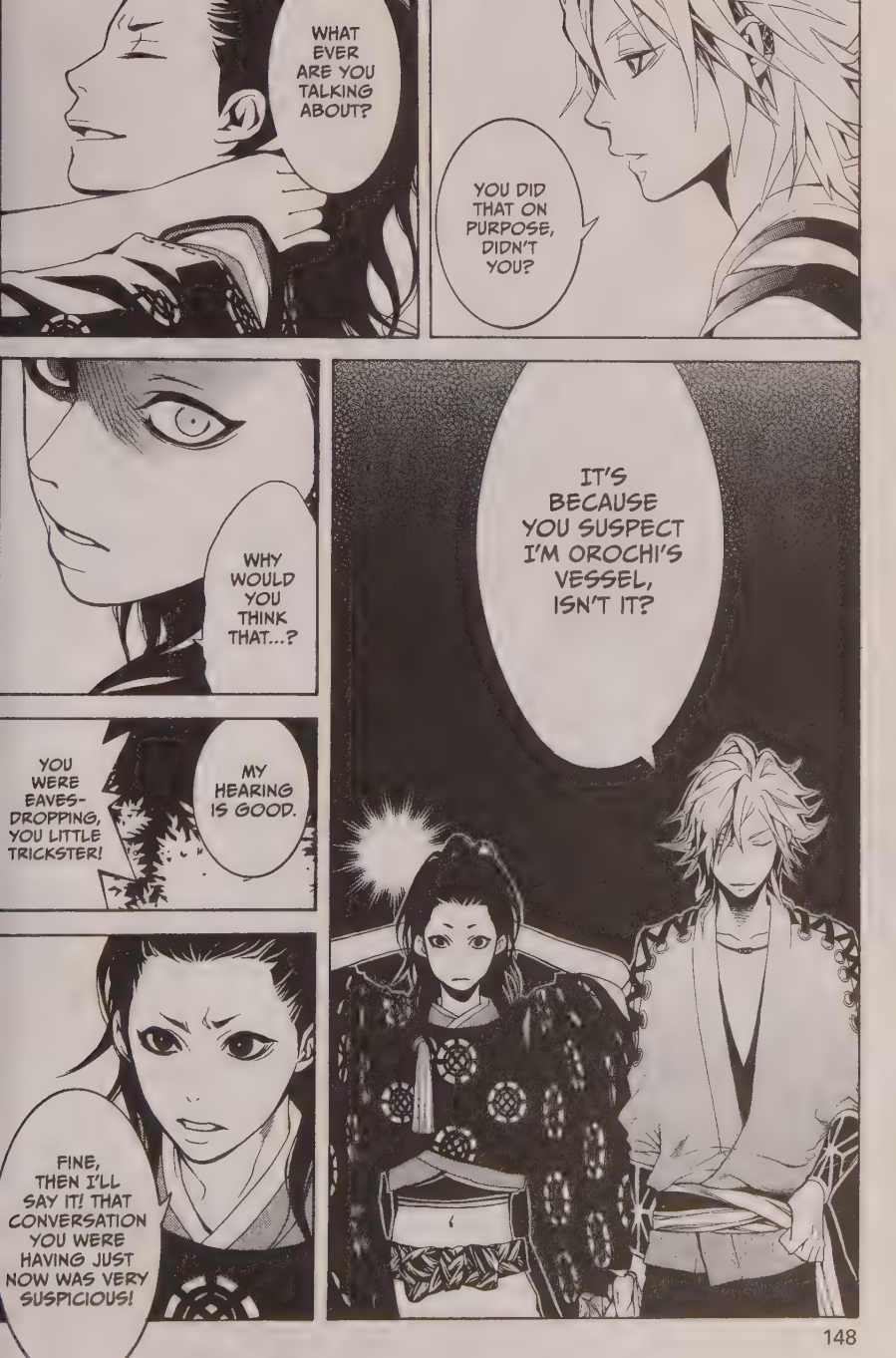

I DON'T INTEND TO LEAVE BEHIND ANY LINGERING ATTACHMENTS, BUT...
I HOPE TO SEE A CLEAR SKY OVER OMI AT LEAST ONCE BEFORE I DISAPPEAR.

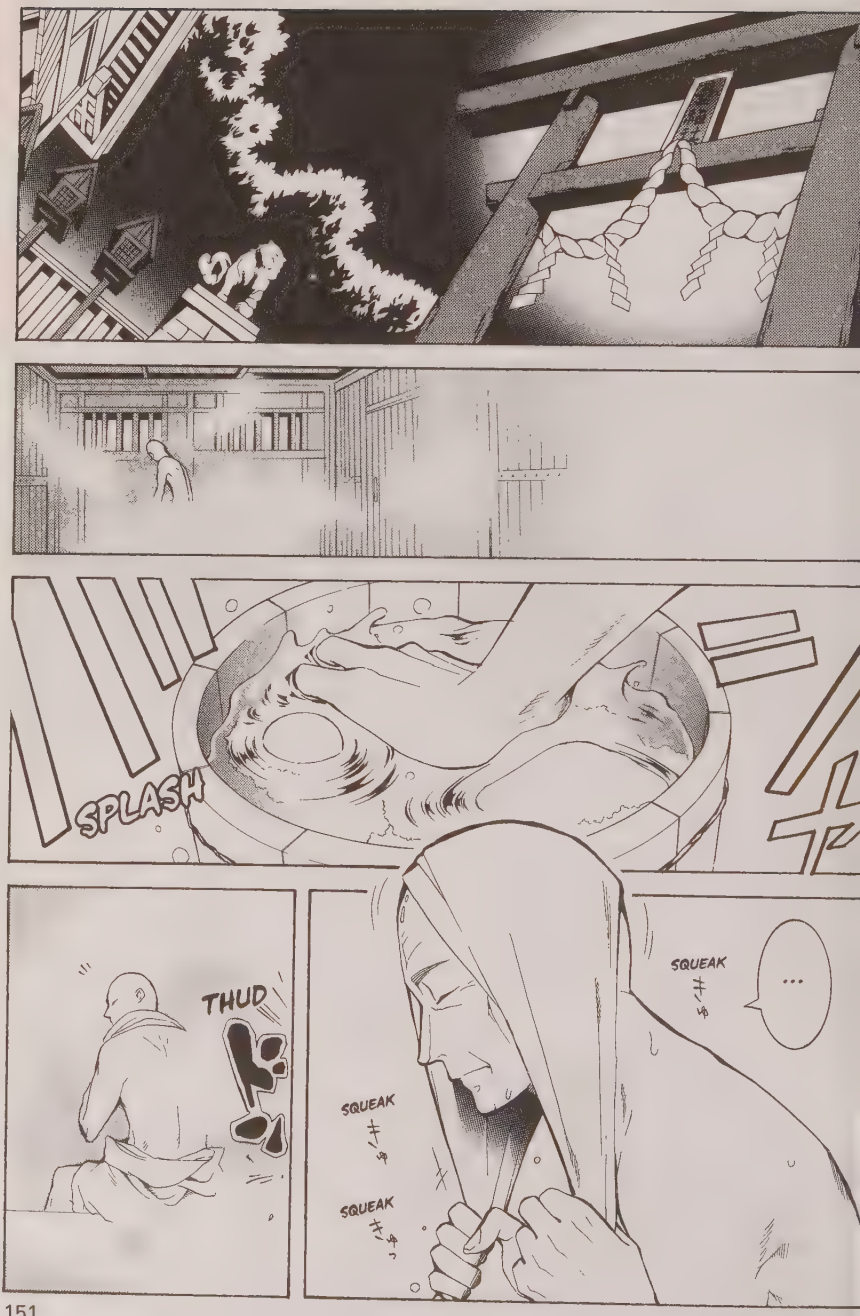

OH.
SHE SMILED! ♡
AGREED.
WHAT A VIEW. OMI IS A BEAUTIFUL CITY.
LORD SASAKI ADORES OMI.
HIS FAMILY PROTECTS IT, WHICH HAS HELPED MAINTAIN THE PEACE.
ONCE THE SUN COMES BACK, LAKE BIWA WILL BE EVEN MORE BEAUTIFUL.
THEY SAY THIS IS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AREA IN ALL OF OMI.
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, IT'S ALWAYS OVERCAST, ISN'T IT?


WHAT DO YOU...?
IT'LL BE ENOUGH TO KEEP ME SMILING AND ALIVE.
JUMP
HEY!
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!
...?
HOW DOES THIS PIPSQUEAK ALWAYS MANAGE TO INTERRUPT JUST WHEN THINGS ARE GETTING GOOD?
NOW HURRY UP AND GET HOME!
I WAS WONDERING WHAT WAS TAKING YOU SO LONG, AND HERE I FIND YOU MAKING GOOGLY EYES!

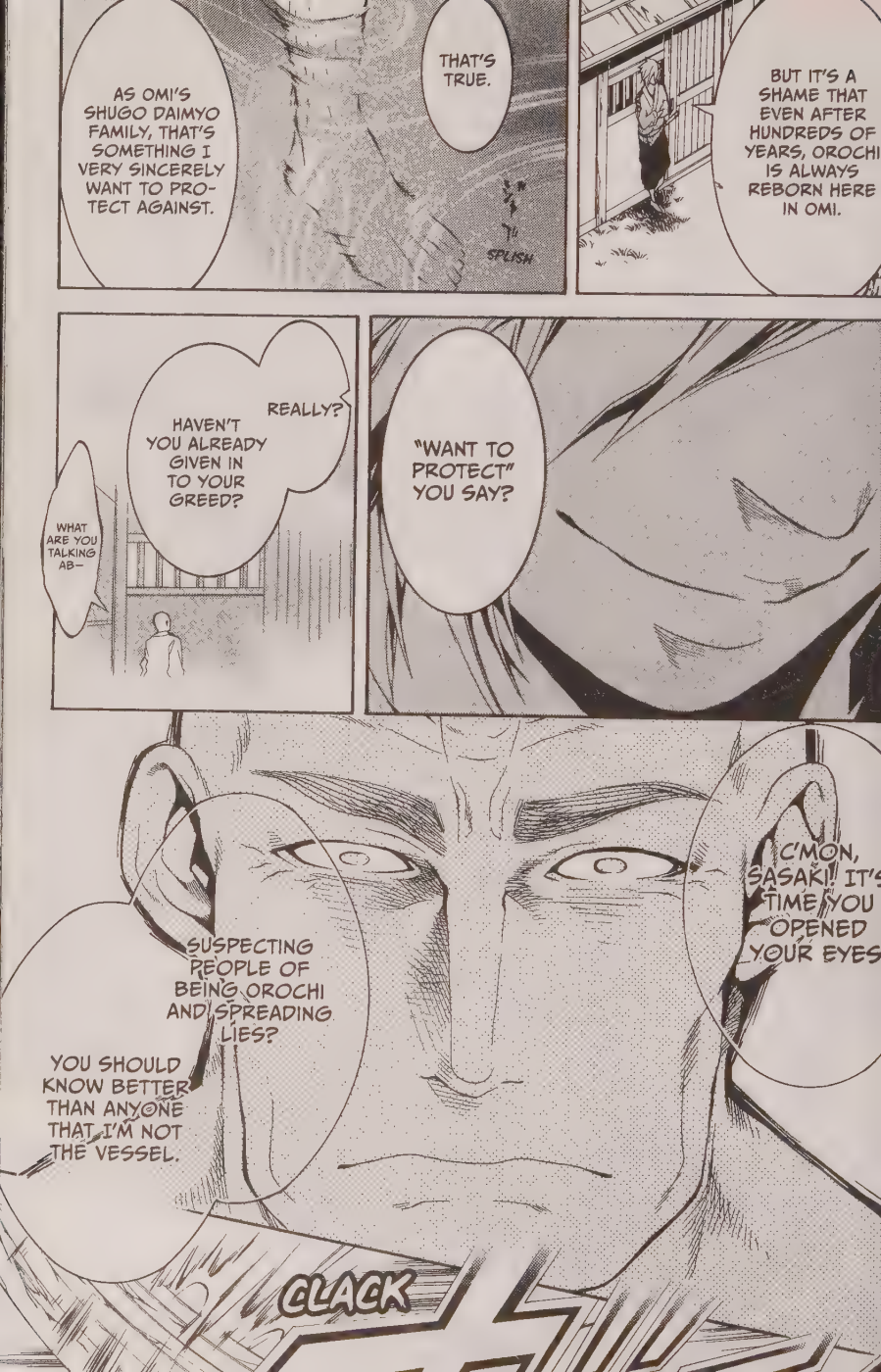

IF YOU LOVE ME SO MUCH, THEN WHY DON'T YOU SAY SOMETHING LIKE "I WON'T LET YOU DISAPPEAR"?
NAH.
WHEN YOU DISAPPEAR, I'LL DIE.
I WON'T LET YOU GO BY YOURSELF.
BECAUSE I'LL BE DYING SOON.
AND IF I'M GOING TO DIE, IT MIGHT AS WELL BE WITH YOU.
BOTAN.
GIVE ME A SMILE.
LORD... HIRARI?

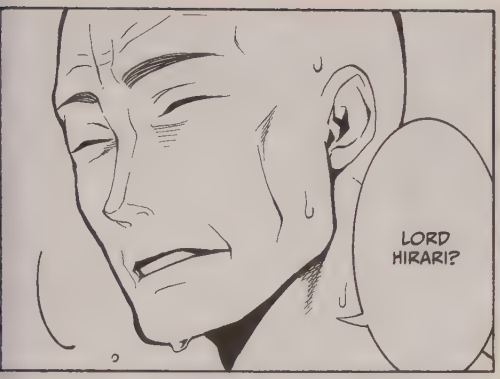

IS THAT WHAT YOU ARE?
A "VESSE
IS A SUBSTITUTE WITHIN WHICH OROCHI RESIDES.
ALWAYS WITHIN MY FAMILY, SASAKI'S FAMILY, OR THE ABE.
SO THERE'S A HIGH POSSIBILITY THAT YOU COULD BE OROCHI.
FOR GENERATIONS, OROCHI'S VESSEL HAS APPEARED WITHIN HIS ENEMY'S BLOODLINE.
HUH.
O-OF COURSE SHE DOES!
I SEE.
HUH?
DOES BOTAN SUSPECT ME, TOO?
LOOKS LIKE THE TIME HAS COME.
SCRITCH


WHAT EVER ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
YOU DID THAT ON PURPOSE, DIDN'T YOU?
WHY WOULD YOU THINK THAT...?
IT'S BECAUSE YOU SUSPECT I'M OROCHI'S VESSEL, ISN'T IT?
YOU WERE EAVES-DROPPING, YOU LITTLE TRICKSTER!
MY HEARING IS GOOD.
FINE, THEN I'LL SAY IT! THAT CONVERSATION YOU WERE HAVING JUST NOW WAS VERY SUSPICIOUS!

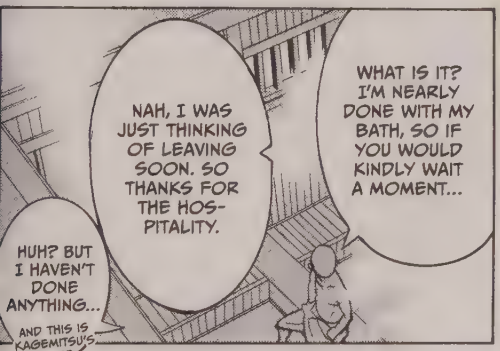

SPLASH
THUD
SQUEAK
キシ
SQUEAK
キシ
SQUEAK
キシ
...


WAIT! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
THAT MAKES ME A LITTLE SAD.
I'M GOING TO WAKE UP FROM THIS FLEETING DREAM...
WHAT'S UP WITH HIM?

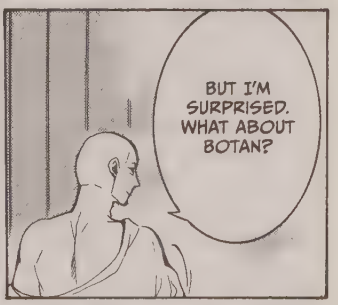

AS OMI'S SHUGO DAIMYO FAMILY, THAT'S SOMETHING I VERY SINCERELY WANT TO PROTECT AGAINST.
THAT'S TRUE.
SPLISH
BUT IT'S A SHAME THAT EVEN AFTER HUNDREDS OF YEARS, OROCHI IS ALWAYS REBORN HERE IN OMI.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING AB—
HAVEN'T YOU ALREADY GIVEN IN TO YOUR GREED?
REALLY?
"WANT TO PROTECT" YOU SAY?
C'MON, SASAKI! IT'S TIME YOU OPENED YOUR EYES
SUSPECTING PEOPLE OF BEING OROCHI AND SPREADING LIES?
YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN ANYONE THAT I'M NOT THE VESSEL.
CLACK

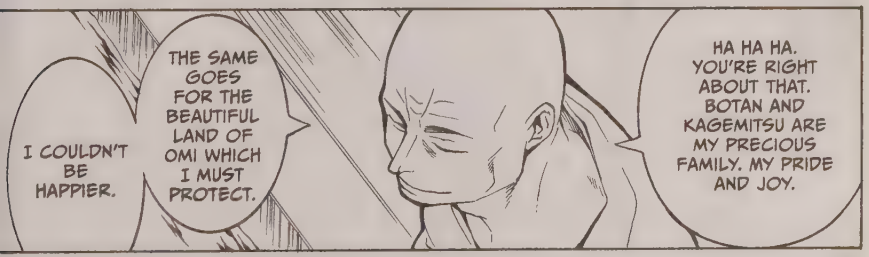

LORD HIRARI?


HEY.
OLD MAN SASAKI.

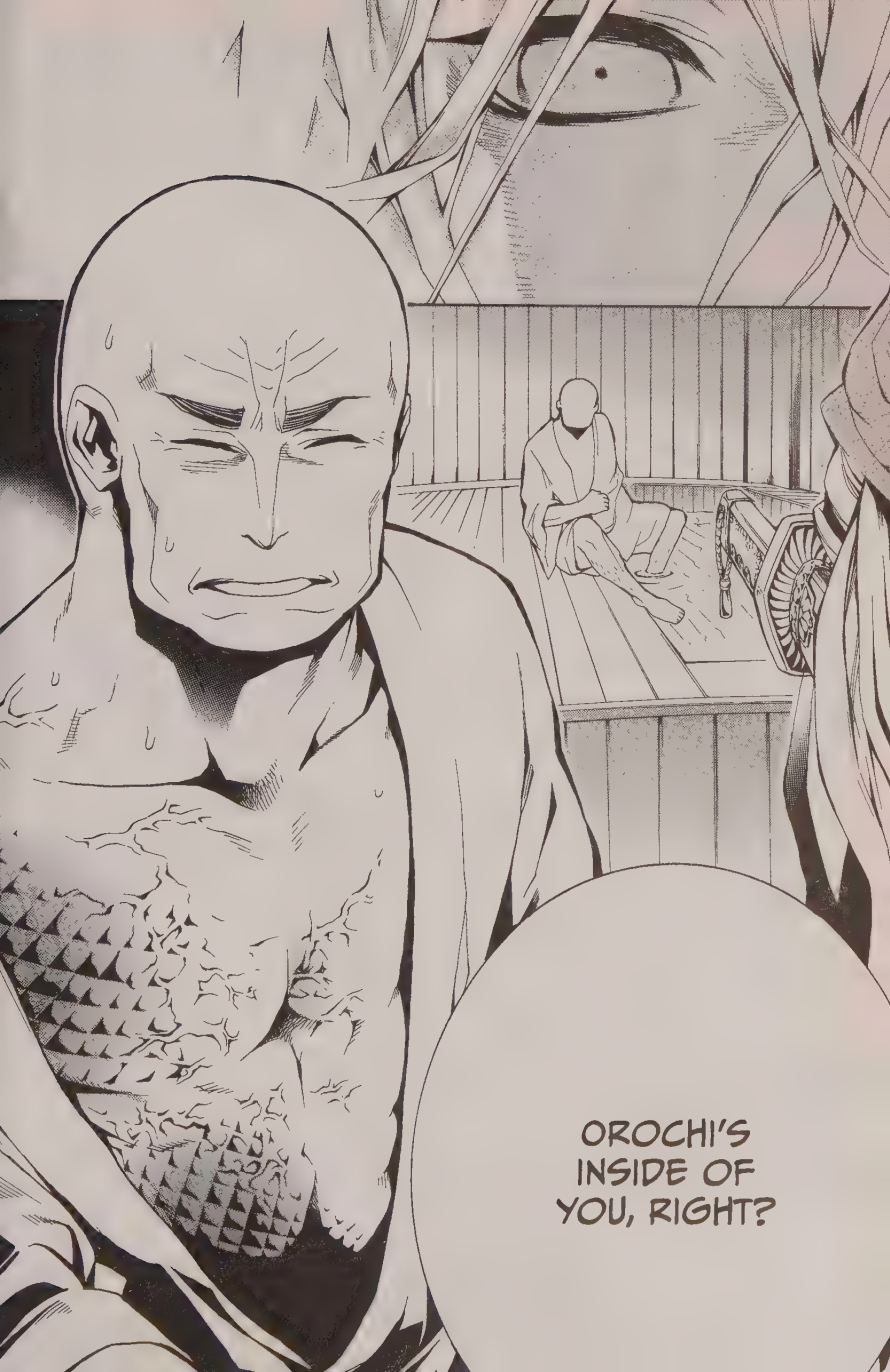

WHAT IS IT? I'M NEARLY DONE WITH MY BATH, SO IF YOU WOULD KINDLY WAIT A MOMENT...
NAH, I WAS JUST THINKING OF LEAVING SOON. SO THANKS FOR THE HOS-PITALITY.
HUH? BUT I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING...
AND THIS IS KAGEMITSU'S PLACE.

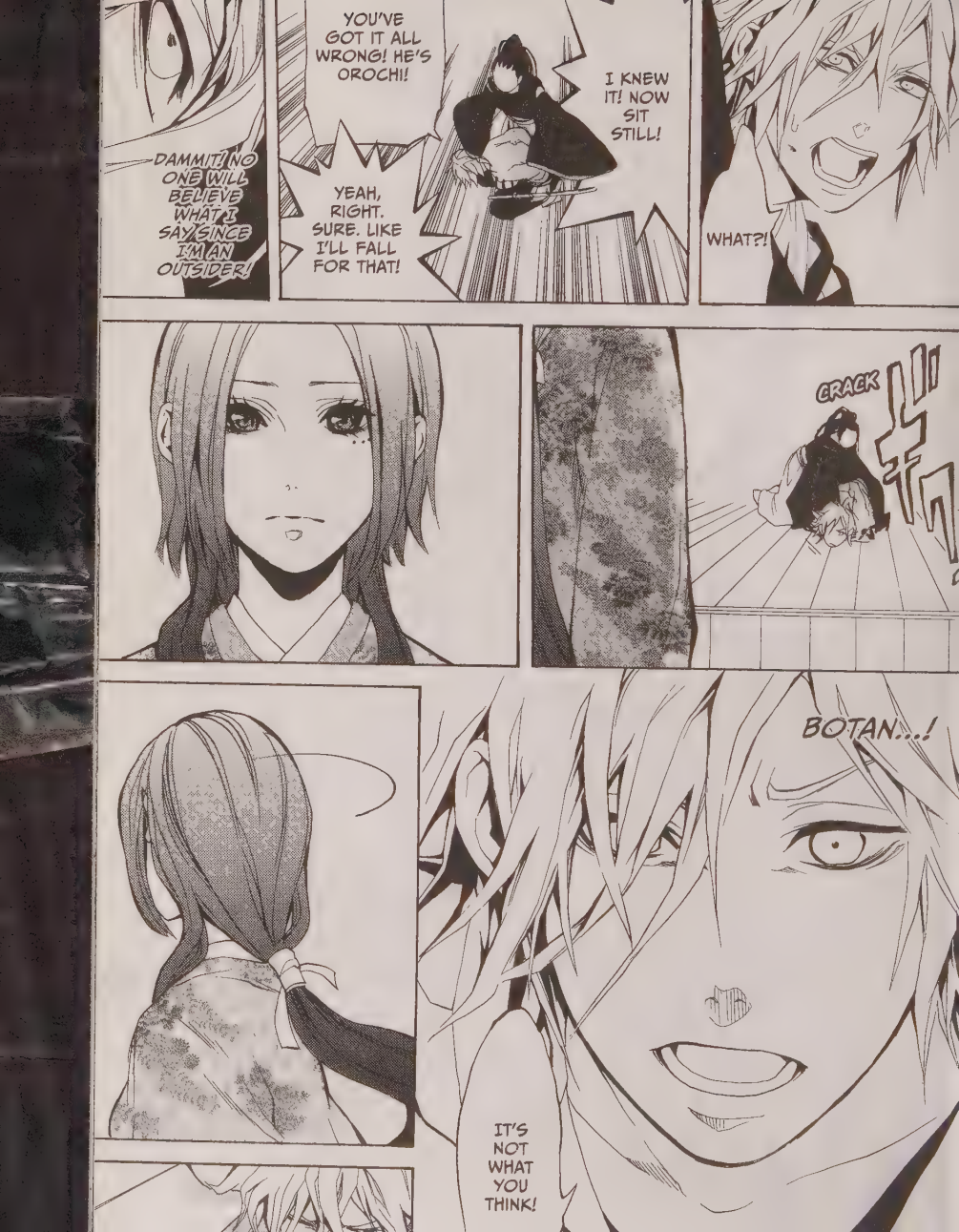

OLD MAN.
THIS IS A GOOD PLACE.
AND SUPER COMFORT-ABLE.

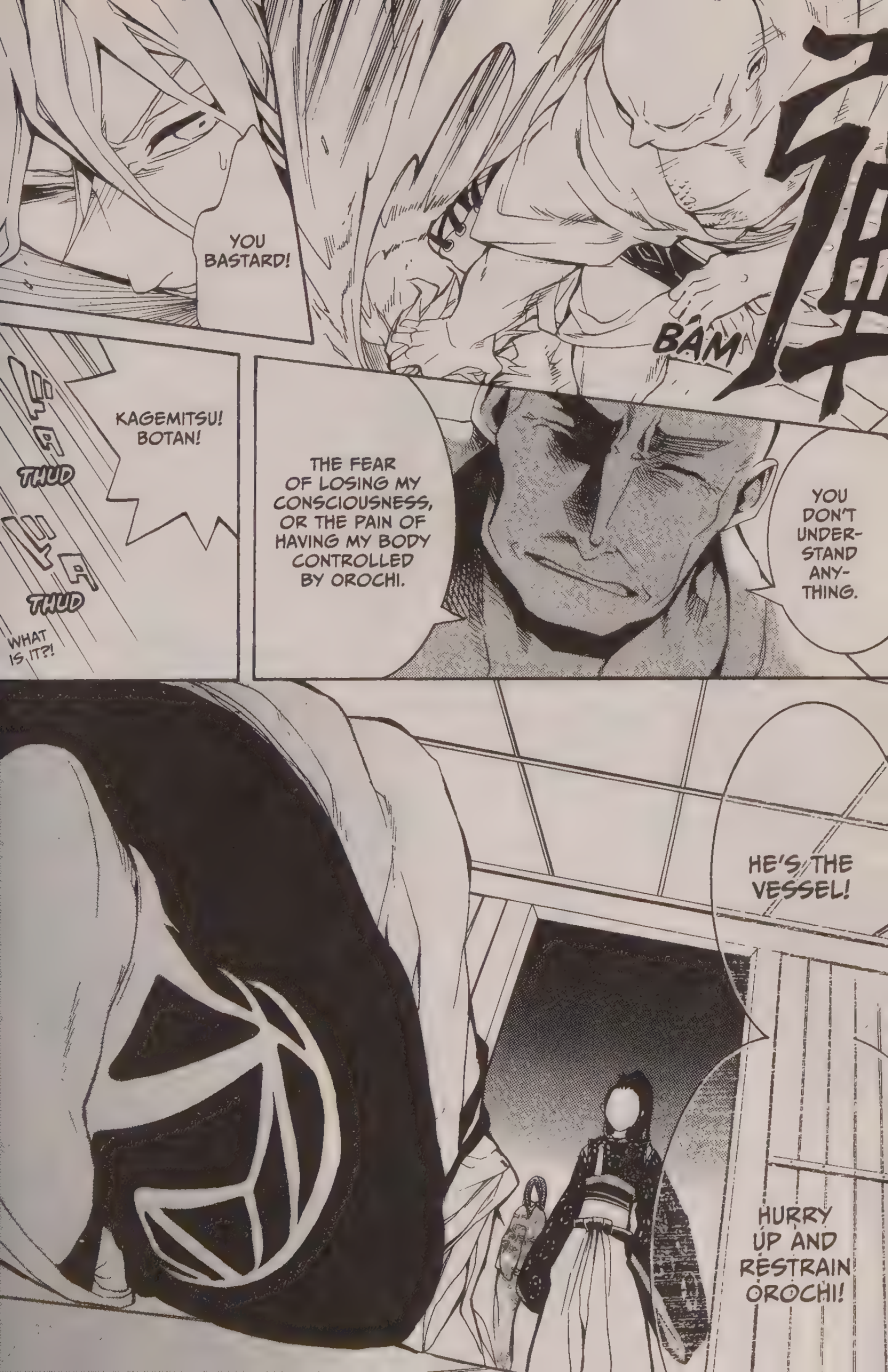

BUT I'M SURPRISED. WHAT ABOUT BOTAN?

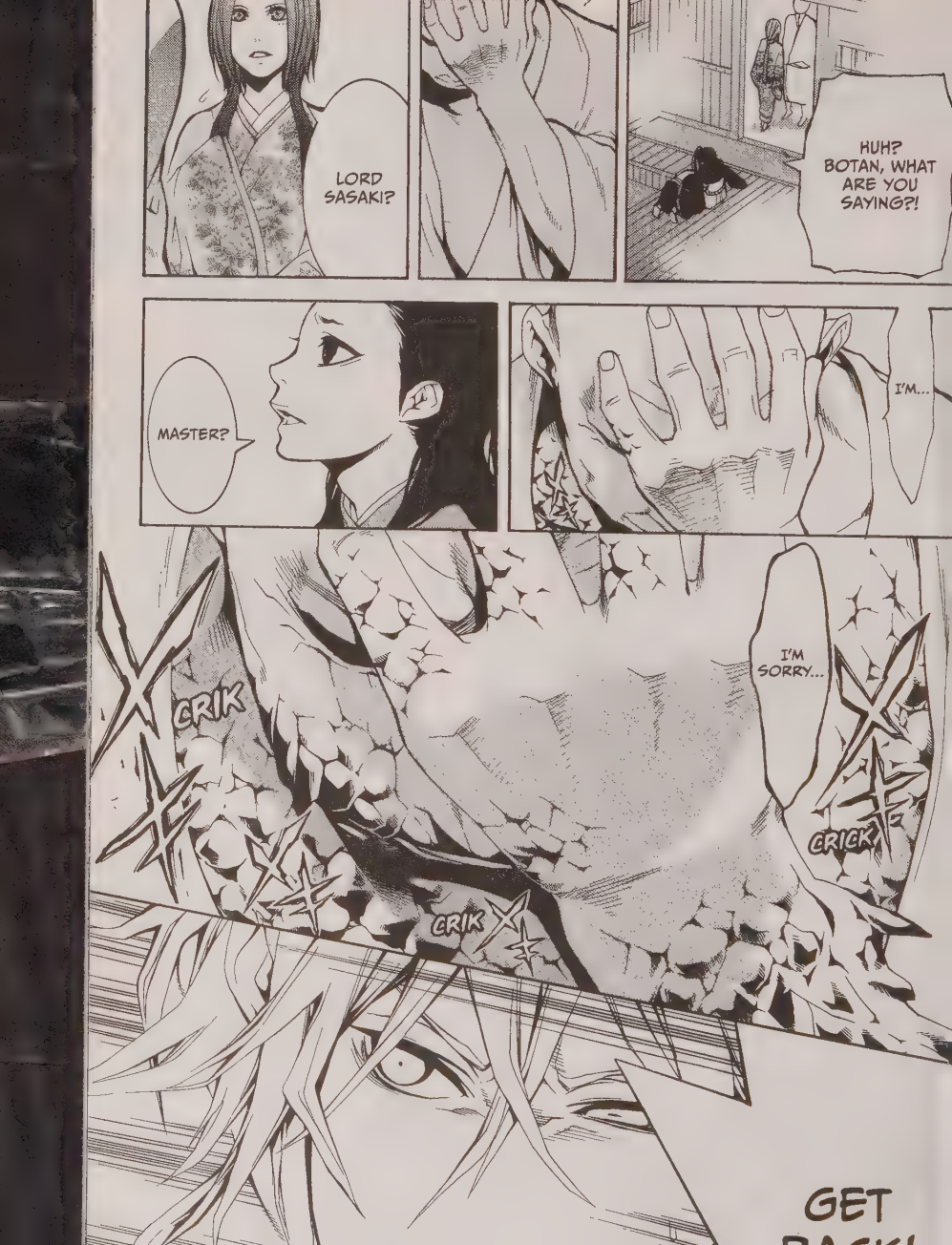

HA HA HA. YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT THAT. BOTAN AND KAGEMITSU ARE MY PRECIOUS FAMILY. MY PRIDE AND JOY.
THE SAME GOES FOR THE BEAUTIFUL LAND OF OMI WHICH I MUST PROTECT.
I COULDN'T BE HAPPIER.

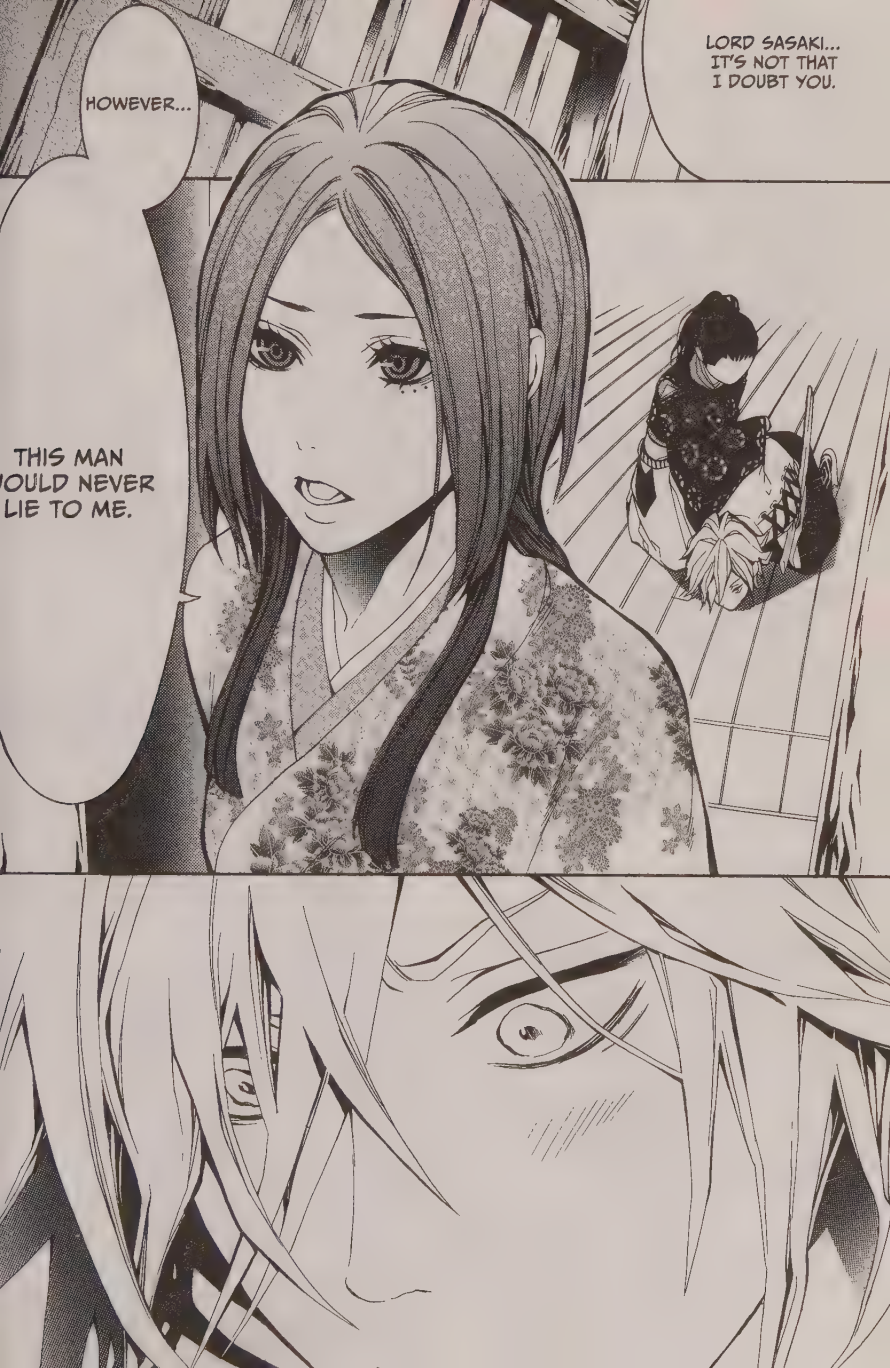

HOW DID YOU FIGURE OUT... THAT I WAS THE VESSEL?
I HEARD THAT NORMALLY, THE SPIRIT GROWS ILL AND IS TAKEN OVER.
I'M IMPRESSED THAT YOU'VE STILL MAINTAINED YOUR SENSE OF SELF, EVEN WITH HOW FAR YOU'VE BEEN INVADED BY IT
THOSE TWO WOULD NEVER REALIZE THE OBVIOUS. THEY TRUST YOU IMPLICITLY.
ASHIYA'S LITTLE AMBUSH WAS ALSO ALL PLANNED. THAT WAS QUITE THE PERFORMANCE. I'D HAVE NEVER IMAGINED YOU'D LAUNCH AN ATTACK AGAINST OROCHI HIMSELF.
I HAVEN'T ONCE SEEN YOU EAT A MEAL SINCE I'VE BEEN HERE.
BUT THAT MAKES SENSE SINCE YOU'VE BEEN EATING PEOPLE INSTEAD.
I DON'T WANT TO DIE.
I WANT TO SMILE WITH THOSE CHILDREN JUST A LITTLE LONGER.
PLEASE.
P-PLEASE! DON'T TELL THEM JUST YET!
?!
WHAT ARE YOU GOING ON ABOUT?

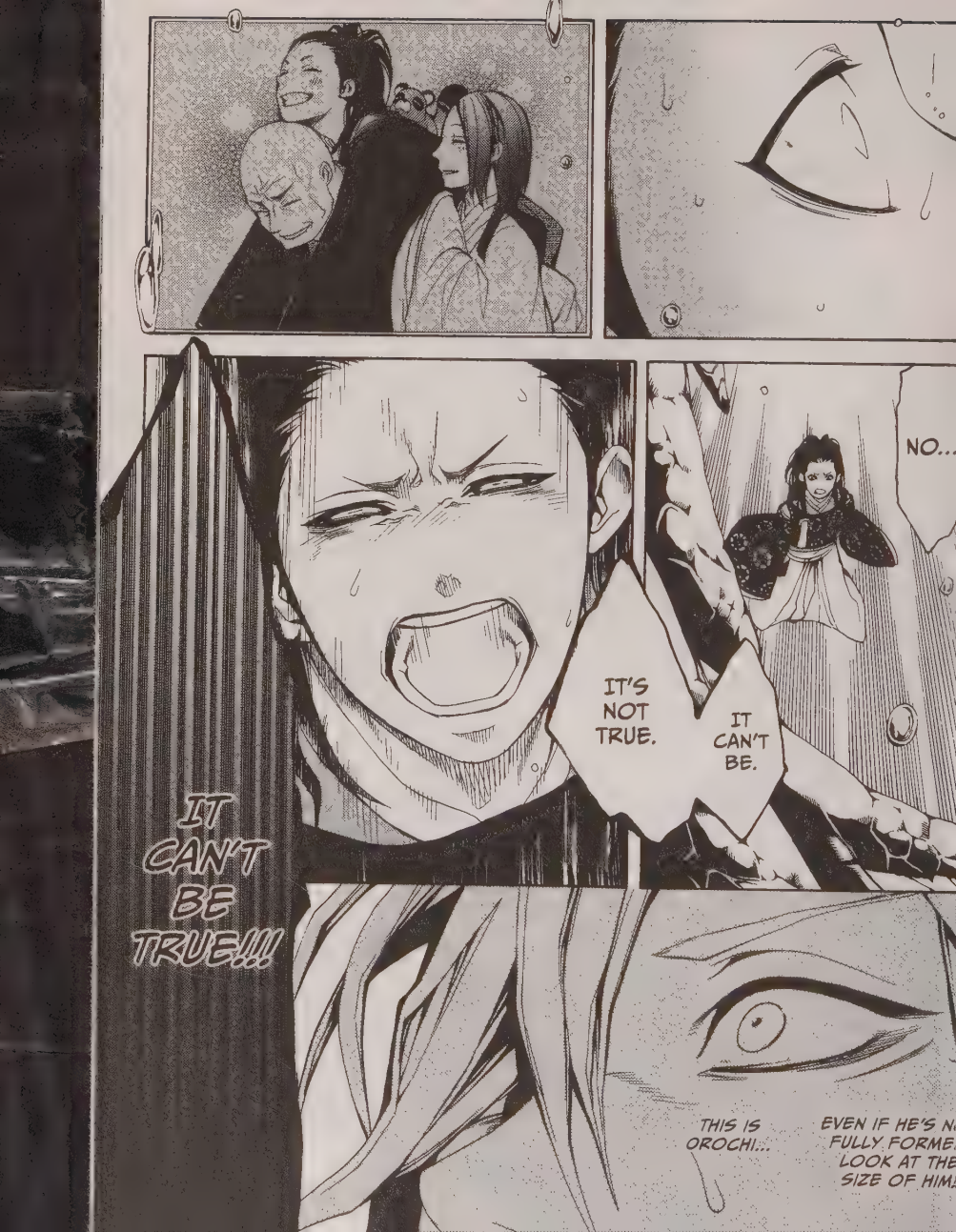

OROCHI'S INSIDE OF YOU, RIGHT?


DAMMIT! NO ONE WILL BELIEVE WHAT I SAY SINCE I'M AN OUTSIDER!
YEAH, RIGHT. SURE. LIKE I'LL FALL FOR THAT!
YOU'VE GOT IT ALL WRONG! HE'S OROCHI!
I KNEW IT! NOW SIT STILL!
WHAT?!
CRACK
BOTAN...!
IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK!

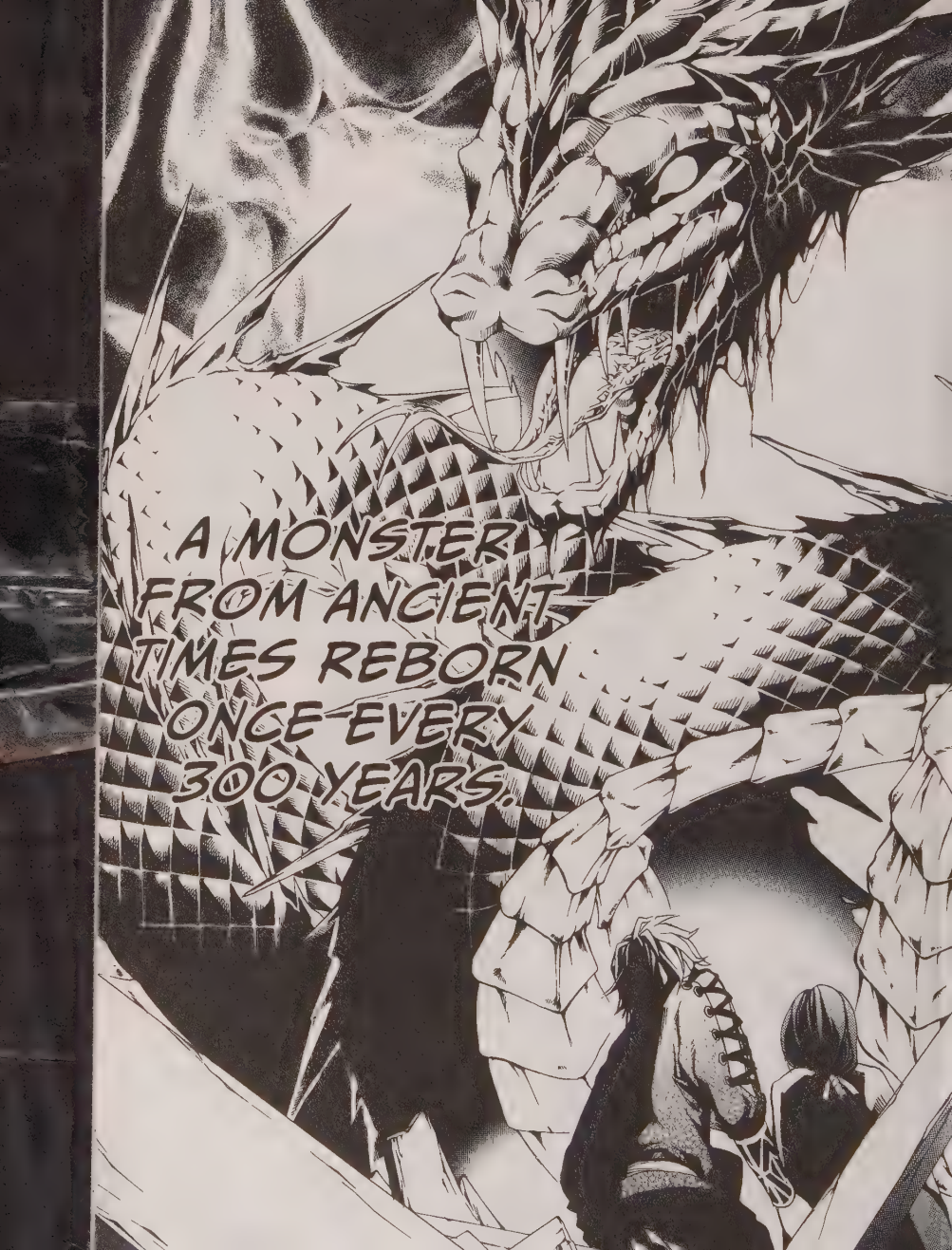

YOU BASTARD!
BAM
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND ANYTHING.
THE FEAR OF LOSING MY CONSCIOUSNESS, OR THE PAIN OF HAVING MY BODY CONTROLLED BY OROCHI.
KAGEMITSU! BOTAN!
THUD
THUD
WHAT IS IT?!
HE'S THE VESSEL!
HURRY UP AND RESTRAIN OROCHI!


LORD SASAKI?
HUH? BOTAN, WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?!
MASTER?
I'M...
I'M SORRY...
CRIK
CRIK
CRICK
GET

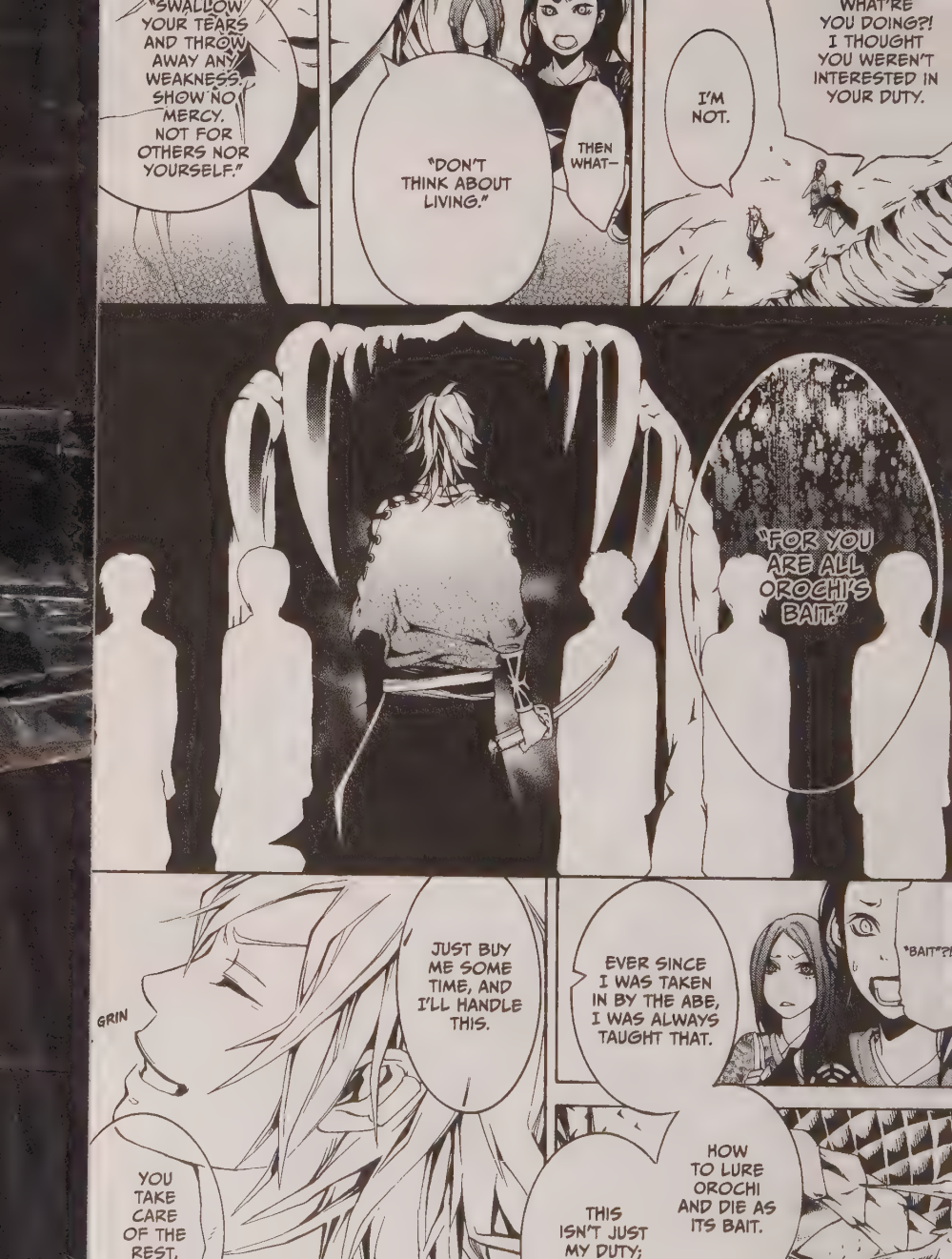

LORD SASAKI... IT'S NOT THAT I DOUBT YOU.
HOWEVER...
THIS MAN
OULD NEVER
LIE TO ME.


NO...
IT'S NOT TRUE.
IT CAN'T BE.
IT CAN'T BE TRUE!!!
THIS IS OROCHI...
EVEN IF HE'S N
FULLY FORME
LOOK AT THE
SIZE OF HIM

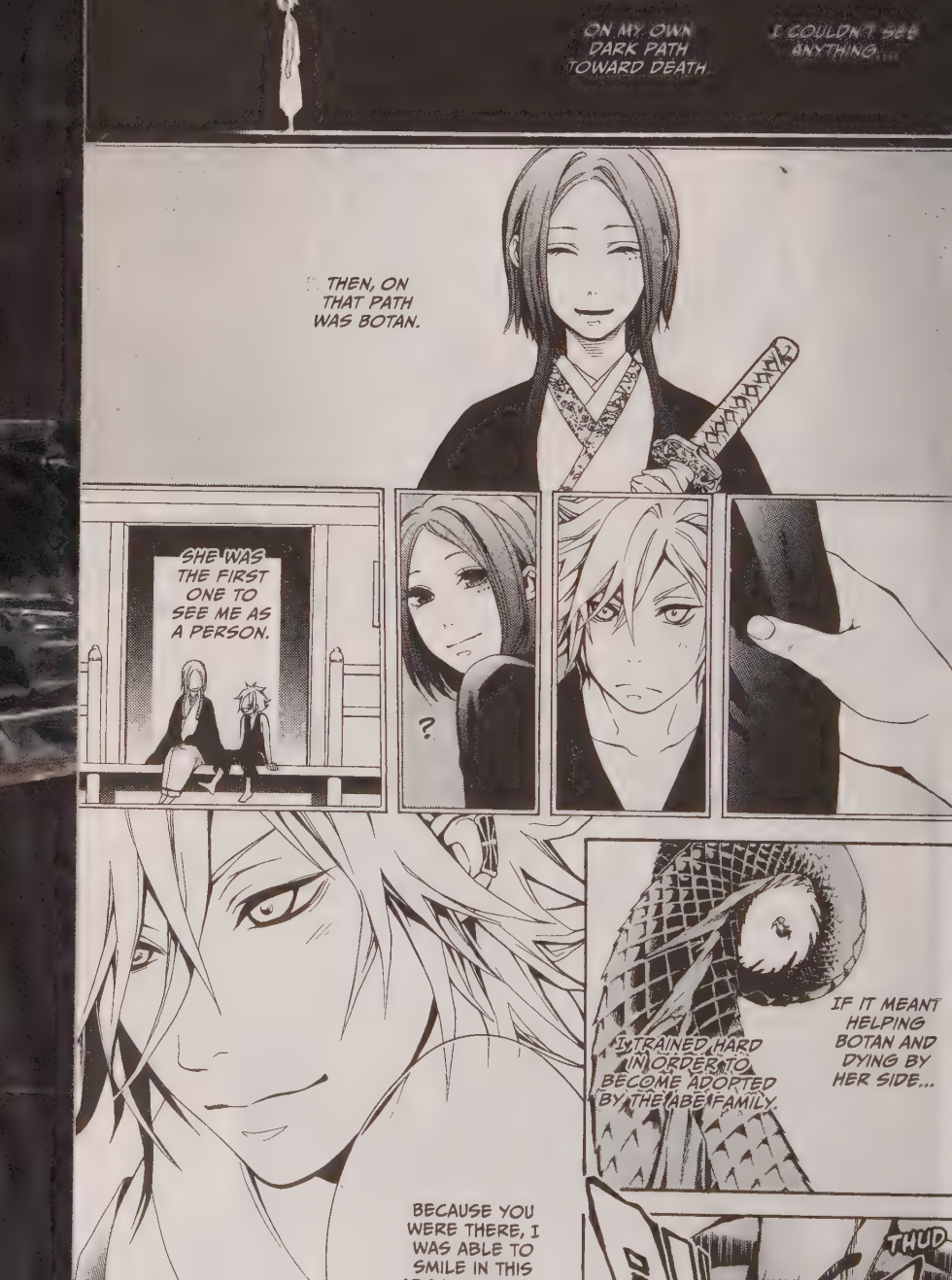

BOOSH
I...
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT
BOTAN!

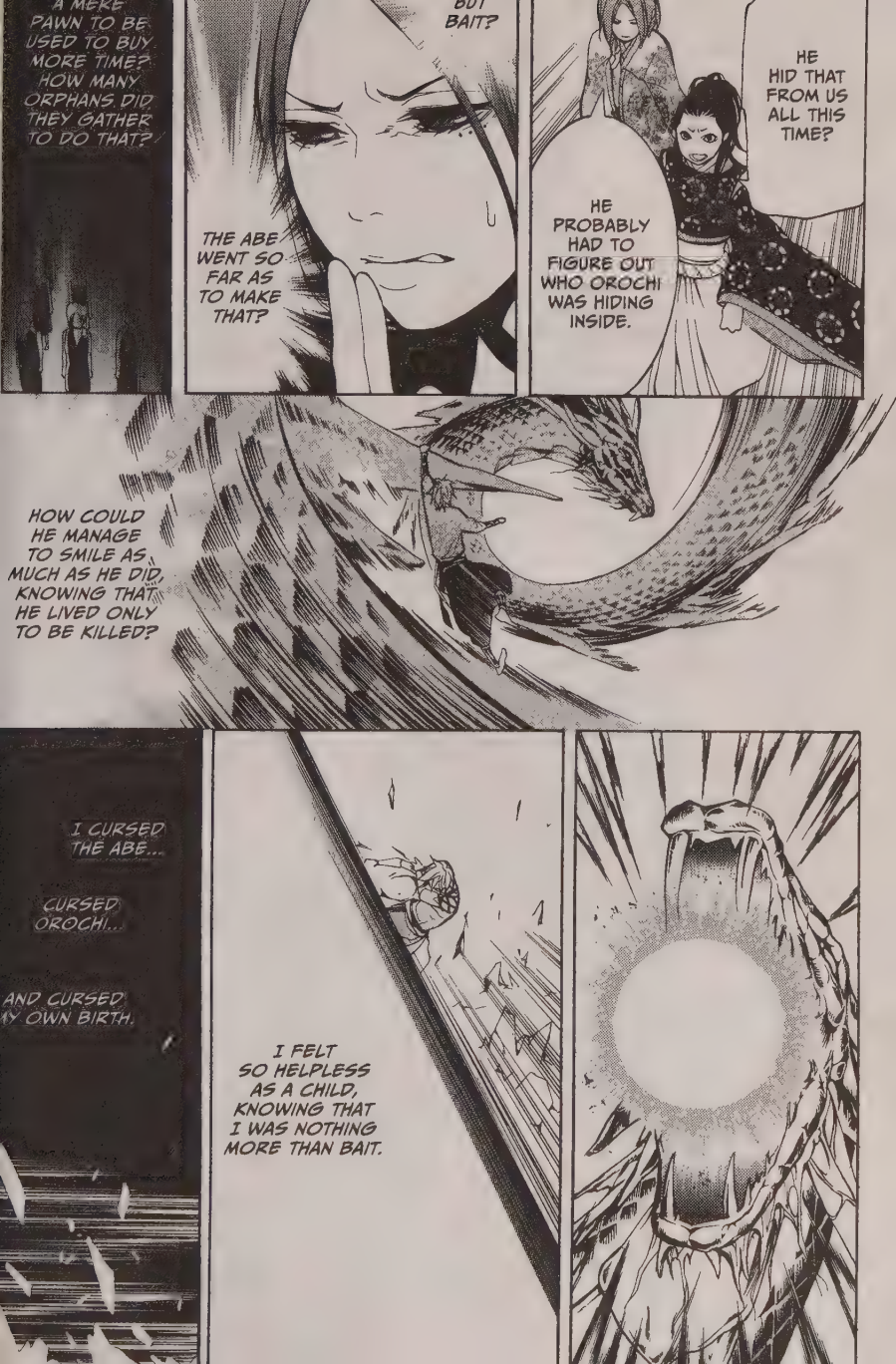

A MONSTER FROM ANCIENT TIMES REBORN ONCE EVERY 300 YEARS.


THE CURSED SERPENT OROCHI...


"SWALLOW YOUR TEARS AND THROW AWAY ANY WEAKNESS. SHOW NO MERCY. NOT FOR OTHERS NOR YOURSELF."
"DON'T THINK ABOUT LIVING."
THEN WHAT—
I'M NOT.
WHAT'RE YOU DOING?! I THOUGHT YOU WEREN'T INTERESTED IN YOUR DUTY.
"FOR YOU ARE ALL OROCHI'S BAIT."
GRIN
JUST BUY ME SOME TIME, AND I'LL HANDLE THIS.
YOU TAKE CARE OF THE REST.
EVER SINCE I WAS TAKEN IN BY THE ABE, I WAS ALWAYS TAUGHT THAT.
"BAIT"?!
THIS ISN'T JUST MY DUTY;
HOW TO LURE OROCHI AND DIE AS ITS BAIT.


SHIVER
GLARE
I'LL MAKE ONE RIGHT AWAY!
SWISH
CAN YOU ERECT A MAGIC BARRIER? WE HAVE TO STOP OROCHI!
OH!
BOTAN!
FANG
WHOOSH
SO PROTECT BOTAN!
HANG IN THERE! YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE THE SHIELD, REMEMBER?

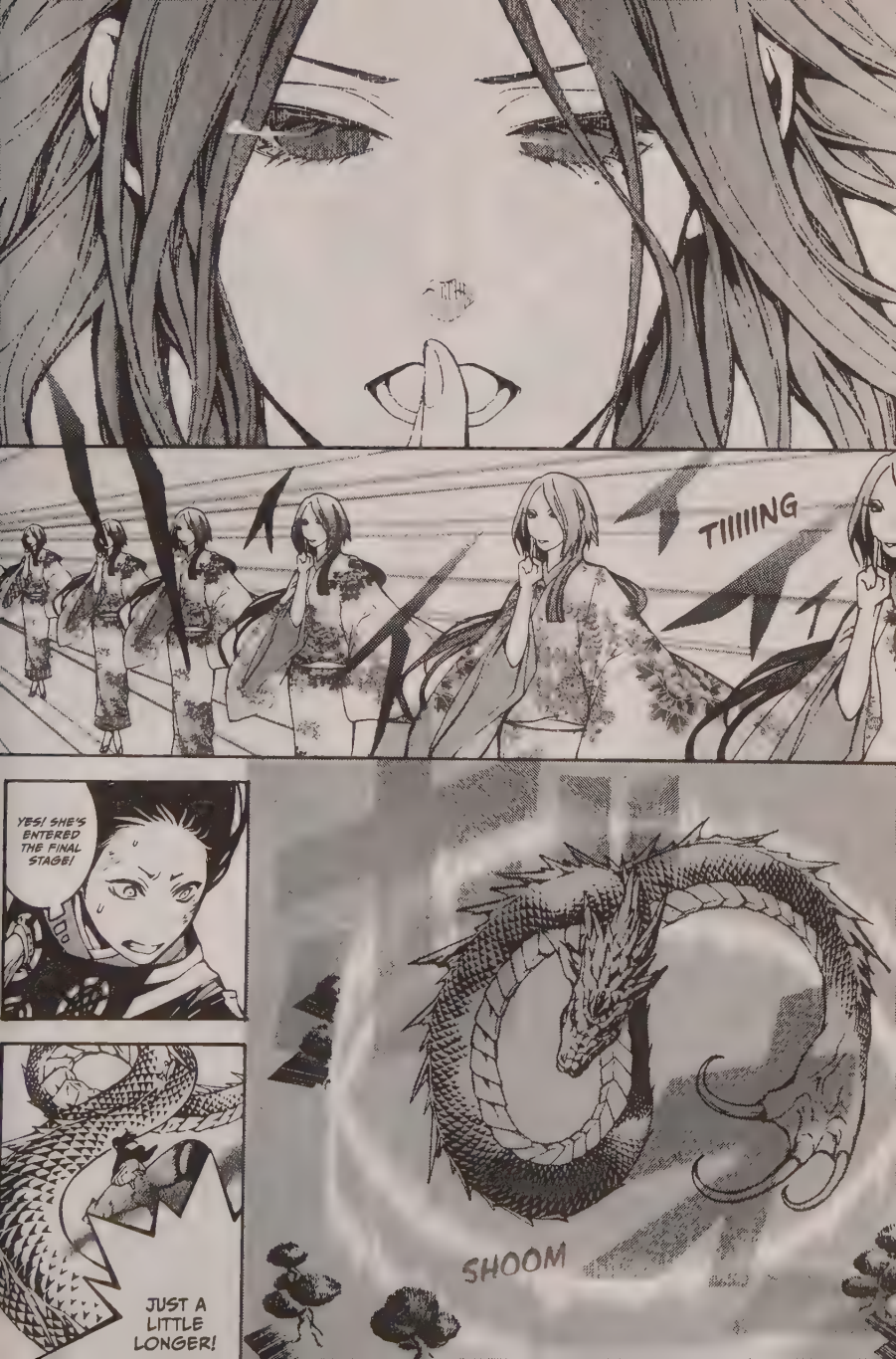

ON MY OWN DARK PATH TOWARD DEATH.
I COULDN'T SEE ANYTHING...
THEN, ON THAT PATH WAS BOTAN.
SHE WAS THE FIRST ONE TO SEE ME AS A PERSON.
?
I TRAINED HARD IN ORDER TO BECOME ADOPTED BY THE ABE FAMILY.
IF IT MEANT HELPING BOTAN AND DYING BY HER SIDE...
BECAUSE YOU WERE THERE, I WAS ABLE TO SMILE IN THIS
THUD


A MERE PAWN TO BE USED TO BUY MORE TIME? HOW MANY ORPHANS DID THEY GATHER TO DO THAT?
BUT BAIT?
THE ABE WENT SO FAR AS TO MAKE THAT?
HE HID THAT FROM US ALL THIS TIME?
HE PROBABLY HAD TO FIGURE OUT WHO OROCHI WAS HIDING INSIDE.
HOW COULD HE MANAGE TO SMILE AS MUCH AS HE DID, KNOWING THAT HE LIVED ONLY TO BE KILLED?
I CURSED THE ABE...
CURSED OROCHI...
AND CURSED MY OWN BIRTH.
I FELT SO HELPLESS AS A CHILD, KNOWING THAT I WAS NOTHING MORE THAN BAIT.


ALL MY LIFE, I'VE ONLY KNOWN HOW TO DIE.
"BUT IN REALITY...
DAMN IT!
SHIT!
I'M GONNA CRY!
I'D ALWAYS WANTED SOMEONE TO TELL ME THAT.
"DON'T DIE."
AND IF POSSIBLE, I WANTED THAT.


DON'T LET HIM DIE!
LORD KAGEMITSU! I'M NEARLY FINISHED WITH THE SPELL! FORGET ABOUT ME FOR NOW AND ASSIST LORD HIRARI!
BUT!
POKO!
HE'S A SPIRIT ANIMAL!
HE'S HUNDREDS OF YEARS OLD!
WHAT THE—?!
BOOF
NOT TO LET YOU DIE!
THESE WERE BOTAN'S ORDERS!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? WHAT ABOUT BOTAN?!
I'M HERE AS BACKUP! WE'LL SPLIT INTO TWO AND CONFUSE HIM!

OH, NO!
GLARE
BOTAN!

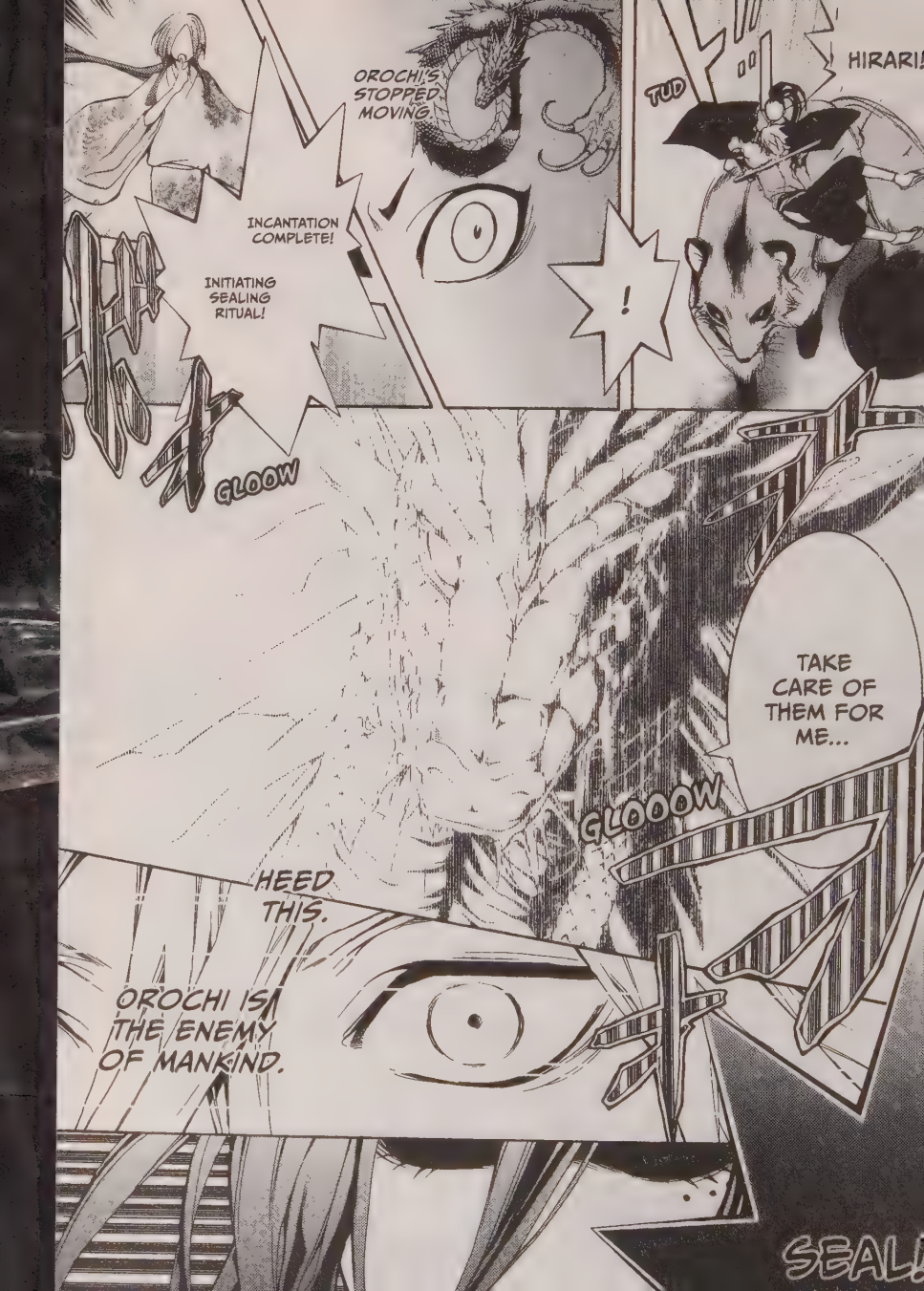

TIIIIING
YES! SHE'S ENTERED THE FINAL STAGE!
SHOOM
JUST A LITTLE LONGER!

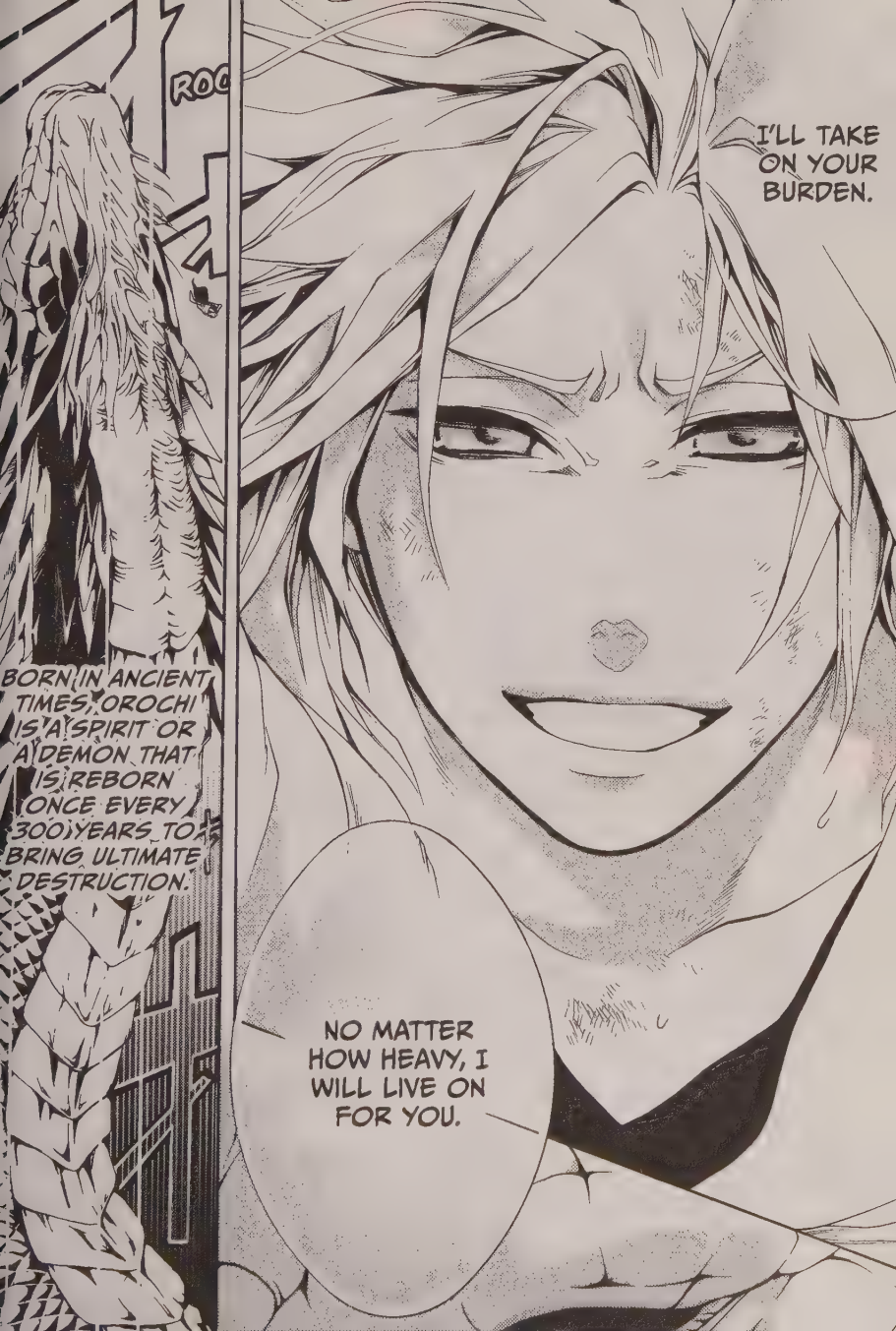
MASTE
MASTER SASAKI! DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE ME?!
—!
YOU'VE FALLEN, KIYOTSUNA


I WON'T LET ANY HARM COME TO YOU.
DON'T FALTER, BOTAN. KEEP DOING THE INCANTATION.
DON'T DIE
NO NEED TO CRY. I'M NOT DYING.
THAT'S A PROMISE.
AND I— NEVER LIE TO YOU, RIGHT?

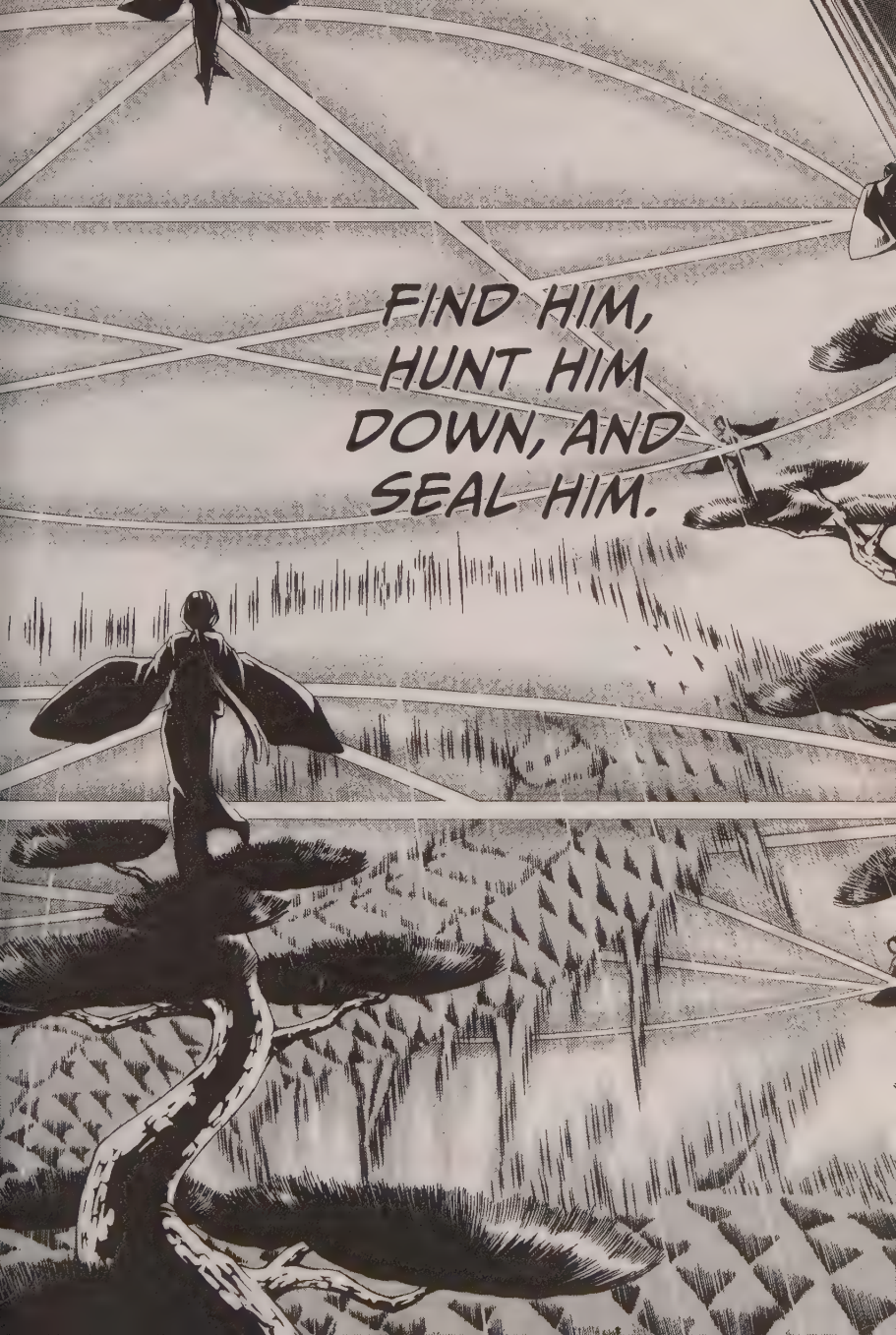
THOOM
MASTERRRRR!
THAT MEANS HIS CONSCIOUSNESS IS STILL IN THERE!
OROCH STARTE CRYING
I KNOW ONLY ALL TOO WELL YOUR WEAKNESS.
NO ONE WANTS TO DIE.
LIFT YOUR HEAD, PROTECTOR OF OMI!
PROTECT THIS LAND WITH YOUR LAST DYING BREATH!
HAVE SOME PRIDE IN YOURSELF!

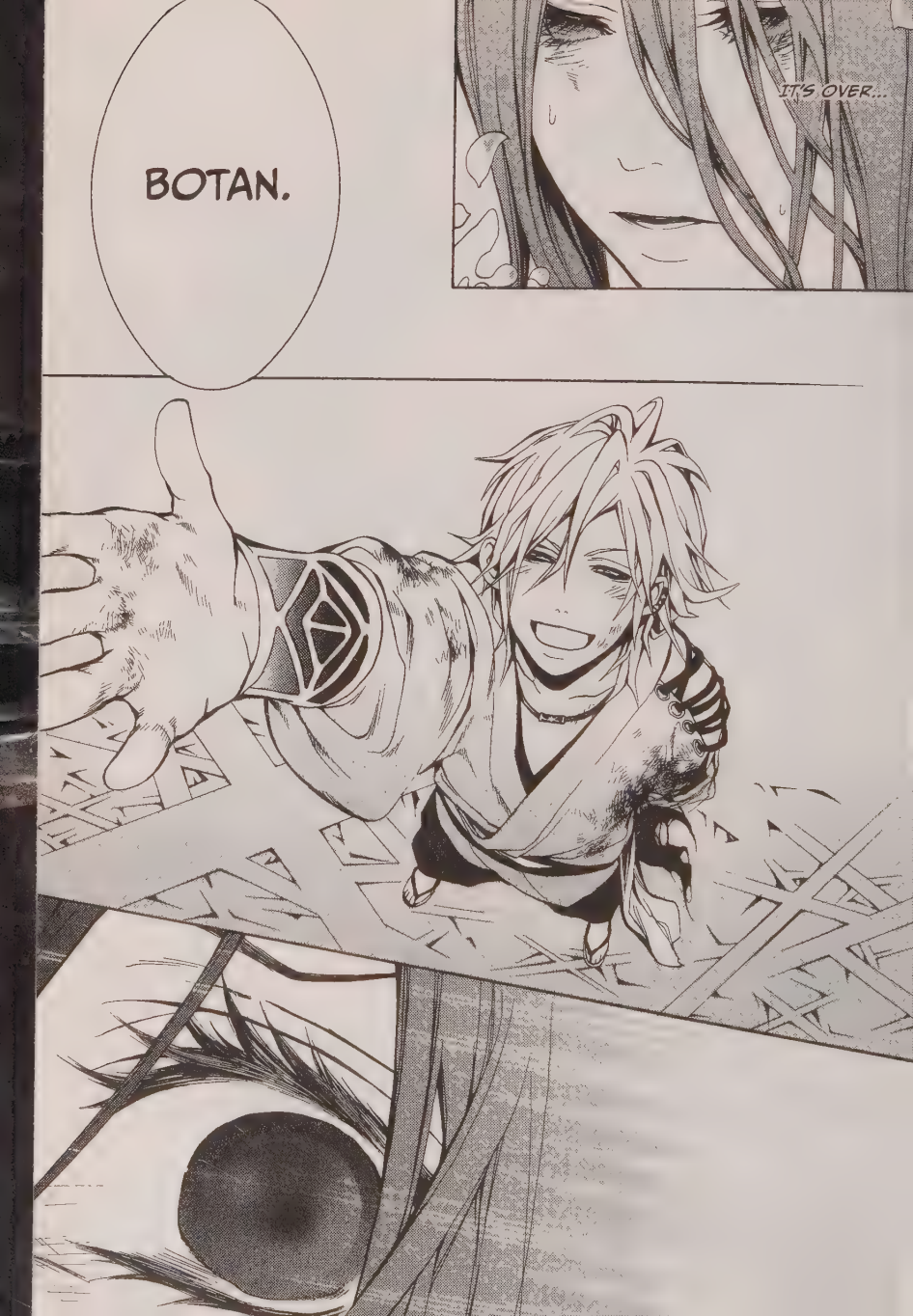

YOU'RE OMI'S SHUGO DAIMYO!
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FEELINGS FOR YOUR BELOVED OMI?!
IT'S NO USE! REGULAR ATTACKS HAVE THE OPPOSITE EFFECT!
YOU'RE BEING PULLED IN!
I DON'T WANT TO DIE.
I'M AFRAID.
I WANT TO STAY LIKE THIS JUST A LITTLE LONGER.
JUST A LITTLE LONGER.
YOU WERE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF BY OROCHI.
AND YOUR WEAKNESS WILL KILL OMI.


OROCHI'S STOPPED MOVING.
INCANTATION COMPLETE!
INITIATING SEALING RITUAL!
GLOOW
TUD
HIRARI!
!
TAKE CARE OF THEM FOR ME...
GLOOOW
HEED THIS.
OROCHI IS THE ENEMY OF MANKIND.
SEAL!


I'LL TAKE ON YOUR BURDEN.
NO MATTER HOW HEAVY, I WILL LIVE ON FOR YOU.
BORN IN ANCIENT TIMES, OROCHI IS A SPIRIT OR A DEMON THAT IS REBORN ONCE EVERY 300 YEARS TO BRING ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION.

SWISH

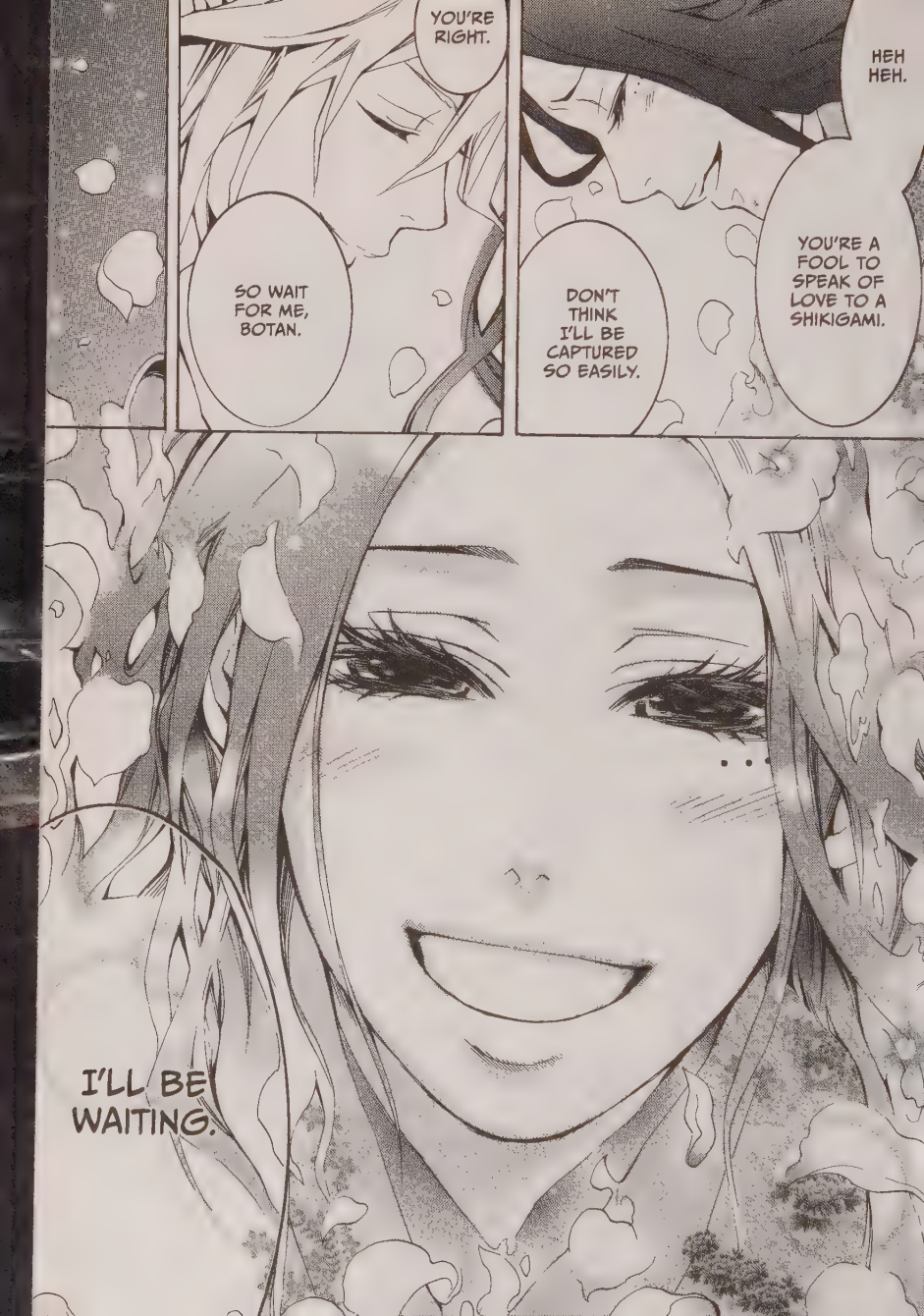

FIND HIM,
HUNT HIM
DOWN, AND
SEAL HIM.


IT'S OVER...
BOTAN.

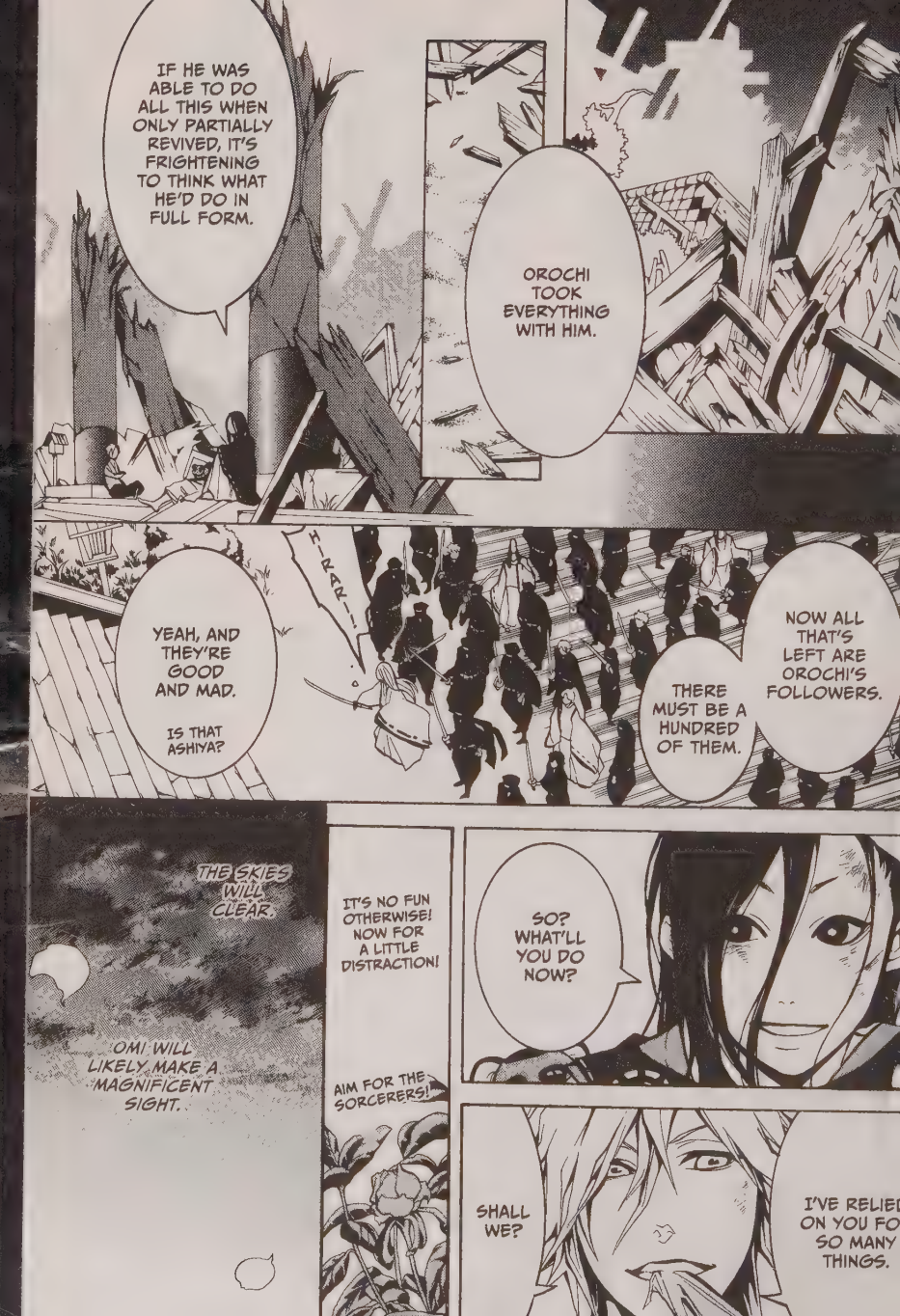

HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!

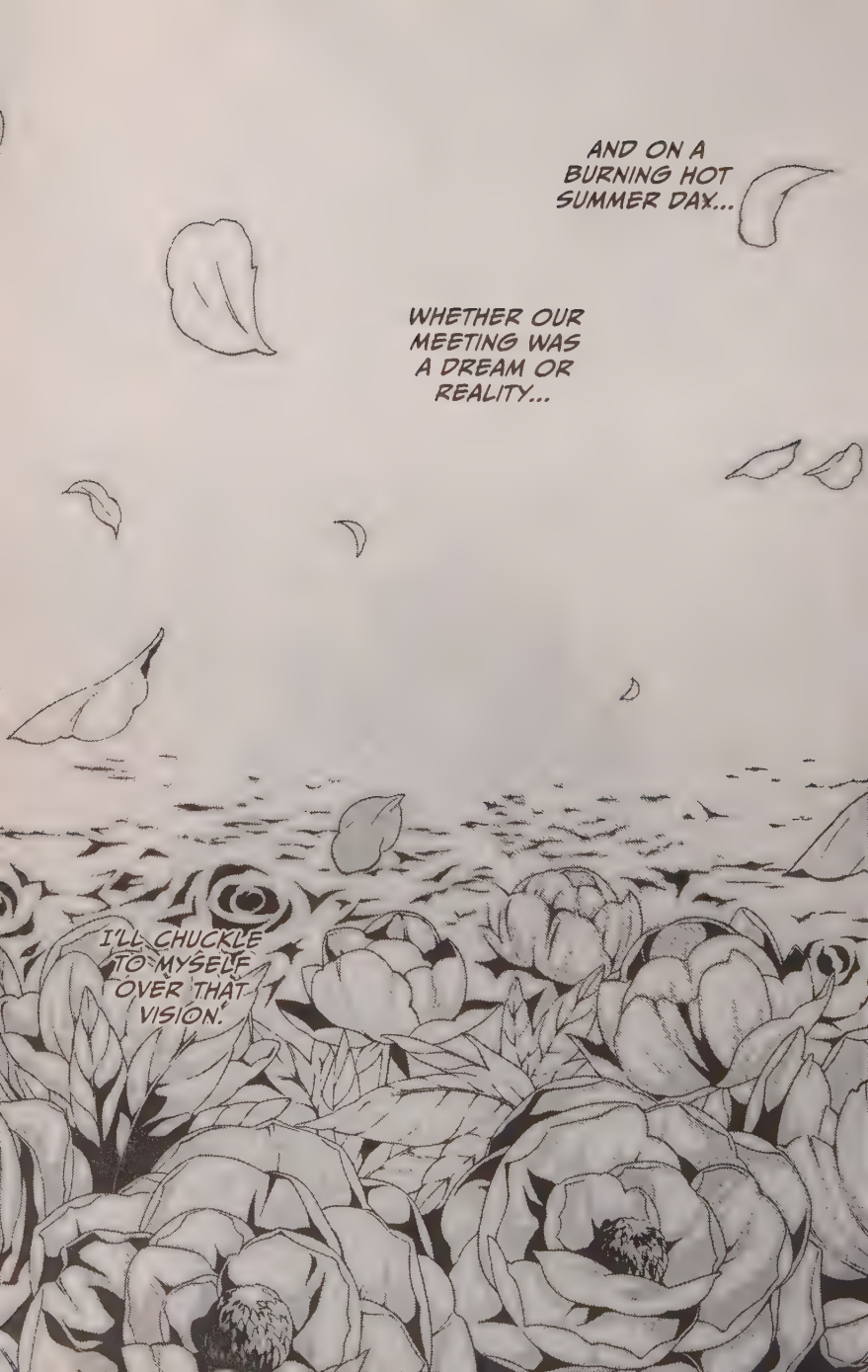

YES, YOU WERE SPECTACULAR. THAT LITTLE BOY FROM LONG AGO GREW UP.
I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING.
ALL I DID WAS SURVIVE. WILL YOU PRAISE ME FOR THAT?
THANK YOU. IT WAS THANKS TO YOU THAT I MANAGED TO SEAL AWAY OROCHI.
YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED AT ALL.
I REMEMBER NOW. THE LITTLE KID WHO TRIED SO HARD TO WOO ME.
SO YOU REMEMBER?
NOW THAT I'VE FULFILLED MY DUTY, I HAVE NO REASON TO KEEP EXISTING.
I WON'T BE ABLE TO SEE YOU ANYMORE.
I WAS SO SINGLE-MINDED.
AND HERE I THOUGHT MY LOVE WAS UNREQUITED ALL THESE YEARS.
THAT ALSO ENDS TODAY.

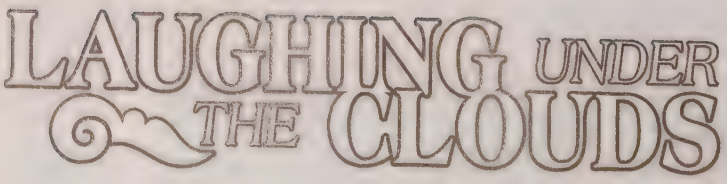

YOUR ARM...
OROCHI'S POISON NUMBED IT, SO I DON'T FEEL A THING.


HEH HEH.
YOU'RE A FOOL TO SPEAK OF LOVE TO A SHIKIGAMI.
DON'T THINK I'LL BE CAPTURED SO EASILY.
SO WAIT FOR ME, BOTAN.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
...
I'LL BE WAITING.

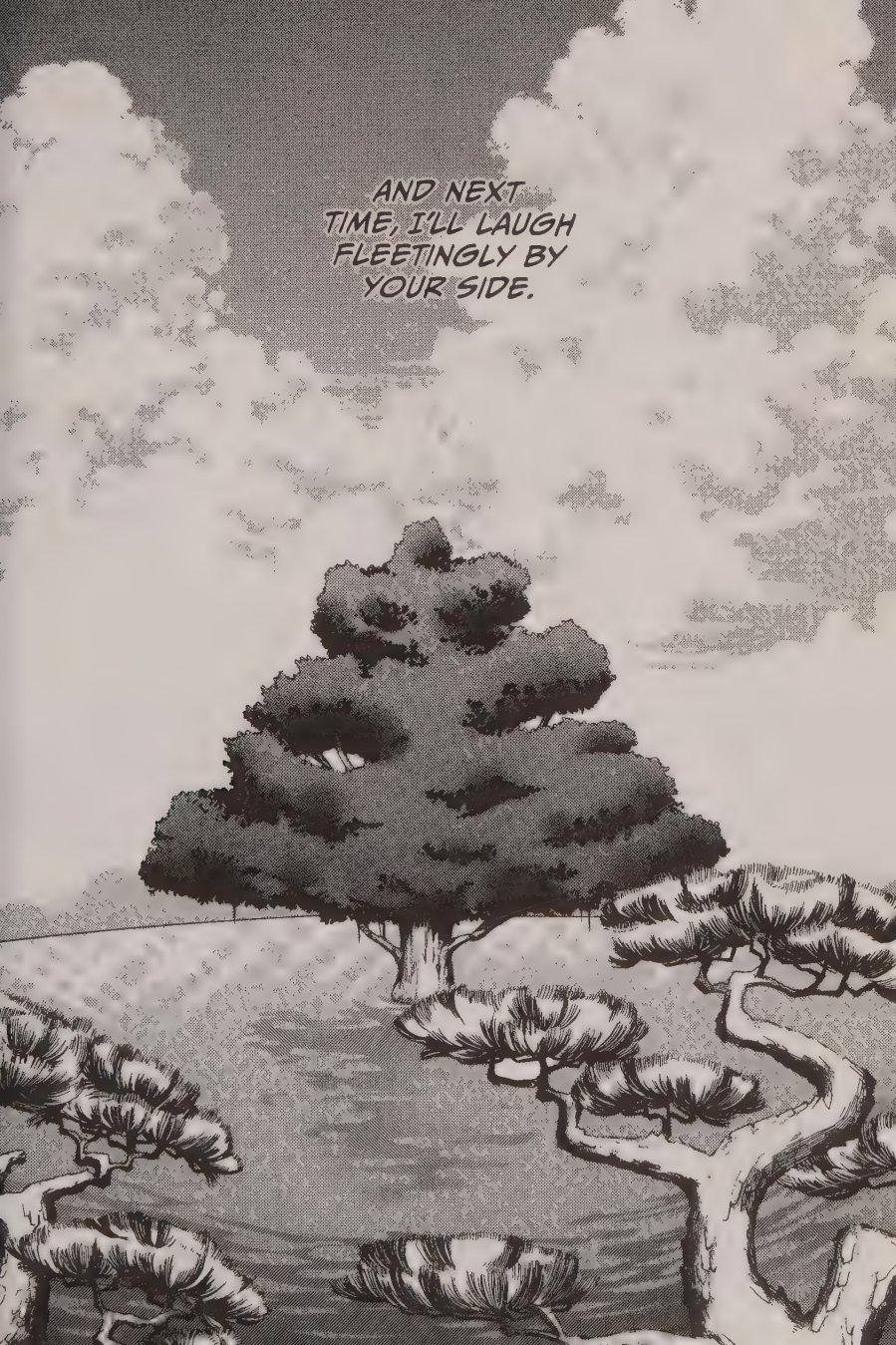

WE'LL SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN.
BOTAN.
NOW THAT I'VE FINALLY HAD A CHANCE TO TOUCH YOU, I'M NOT LETTING YOU GO SO EASILY.
EVEN IF WE'RE APART IN THIS LIFETIME, I'LL COME FIND YOU IN THE NEXT.
NEXT TIME, I WANT YOU TO SPEND YOUR LIFE WITH ME.
I LOVE YOU.


IF HE WAS ABLE TO DO ALL THIS WHEN ONLY PARTIALLY REVIVED, IT'S FRIGHTENING TO THINK WHAT HE'D DO IN FULL FORM.
OROCHI TOOK EVERYTHING WITH HIM.
YEAH, AND THEY'RE GOOD AND MAD.
IS THAT ASHIYA?
HIRAR!!
THERE MUST BE A HUNDRED OF THEM.
NOW ALL THAT'S LEFT ARE OROCHI'S FOLLOWERS.
THE SKIES WILL CLEAR.
OMI WILL LIKELY MAKE A MAGNIFICENT SIGHT.
IT'S NO FUN OTHERWISE! NOW FOR A LITTLE DISTRACTION!
AIM FOR THE SORCERERS!
SO? WHAT'LL YOU DO NOW?
SHALL WE?
I'VE RELIED ON YOU FO SO MANY THINGS.


AND ON A BURNING HOT SUMMER DAY...
WHETHER OUR MEETING WAS A DREAM OR REALITY...
I'LL CHUCKLE TO MYSELF OVER THAT VISION.



VOLUME 1 - END


AND NEXT TIME, I'LL LAUGH FLEETINGLY BY YOUR SIDE.

THE FOX & LITTLE TANUKI, VOLUME 1

Mi Tagawa

TOKYOPOP

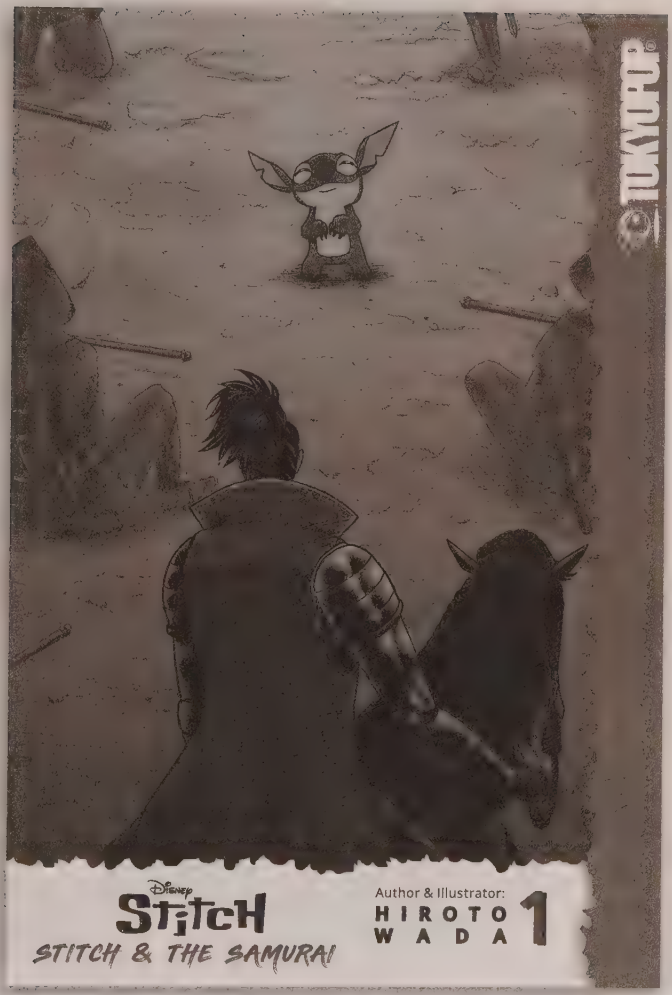
It is said that there are some special animals occasionally born with great powers. Senzou the black fox is one of those... but instead of using his powers for good, he abused his strength until the Sun Goddess imprisoned him for his bad behavior.

Three hundred years later, he's finally been released, but only on one condition — he can't have any of his abilities back until he successfully helps a tanuki cub named Manpachi become an assistant to the gods.

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DISNEY STITCH AND THE SAMURAI, VOLUME 1

Hiroto Wada



DISNEY MANGA

While fleeing the Galactic Federation, Stitch's spaceship malfunctions and he makes an emergency landing... not in Hawaii, but in sengoku-era Japan! Discovered by the brutal warlord Lord Yamato and his clan, Stitch's incomparable cuteness is no match for the battle-weary samurai, who decides to bring the "blue tanuki" home with him. Will Stitch's love of chaos turn into a formidable advantage for the samurai's influence? Or will his cute and fluffy form disarm the noble lord's stern façade?

© Disney

SCARLET SOUL VOLUME 1

Kira Yukishiro



INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN of MANGA

TOKYOPOP

Long ago, Eron Shirano used the sacred Sword of a Hundred Souls to seal away the demon underworld Ruhmon. Since then, the Kingdom of Nohmur has enjoyed peace and prosperity with the aid of his descendants, the exorcist clan that protects the barrier. Until one day, for unknown reasons, demons begin slipping through once more...

When Priestess Lys Shirano suddenly vanishes without a trace, it's up to her little sister Rin to take up the sword she left behind. Even though she's an outcast on friendly terms with the mysterious demon Aghyr, Rin sets out to find her missing sister... and try to restore balance to Nohmur before it's far too late.

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KONOHANA KITAN VOLUME 1

Sakuya Amano



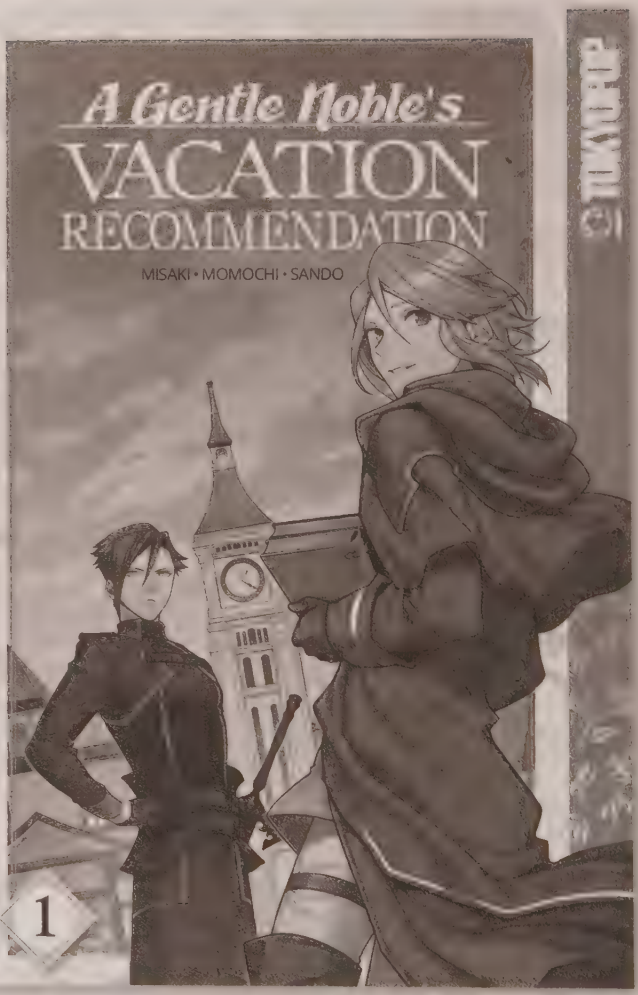
TOKYOPOP

Yuzu is a brand new employee at Konohanatei, the hot-springs inn that sits on the crossroads between worlds. A simple, clumsy but charmingly earnest girl, Yuzu must now figure out her new life working alongside all the other fox-spirits who run the inn under one cardinal rule - at Konohanatei, every guest is a god! Konohana Kitan follows Yuzu's day to day life working at the inn, meeting the other employees and ever-eclectic guests, and learning to appreciate the beauty of the world around her.

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A GENTLE NOBLE'S VACATION RECOMMENDATION, VOLUME 1

Momochi



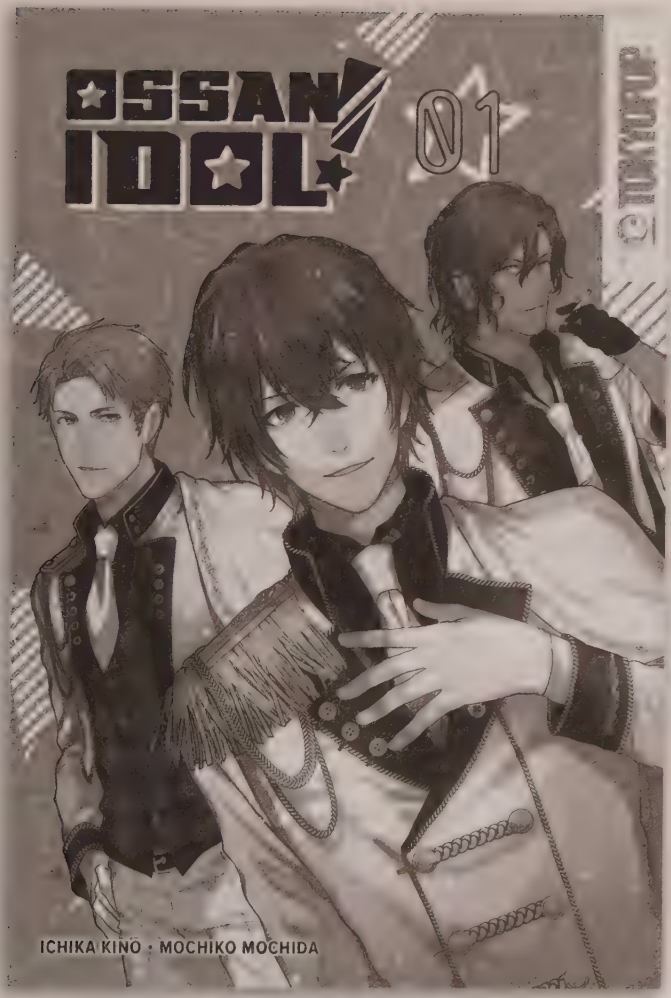
TOKYOPOP

When Lizel mysteriously finds himself in a city that bears odd similarities to his own but clearly isn't, he quickly comes to terms with the unlikely truth: this is an entirely different world. Even so, laid-back Lizel isn't the type to panic. He immediately sets out to learn more about this strange place, and to help him do so, hires a seasoned adventurer named Gil as his tour guide and protector. Until he's able to find a way home, Lizel figures this is a perfect opportunity to explore a new way of life adventuring as part of a guild. After all, he's sure he'll go home eventually... might as well enjoy the otherworldly vacation for now!

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OSSAN IDOL! VOLUME 1

Mochiko Mochida



TOKYOPOP

Miroku Osaki is 36 years old, unemployed, and unhappy. Having been bullied in his childhood and even into his adult life, he became a shut-in after being unfairly laid off. For a long time, the only thing that brought him joy was online gaming. Then, he tried the popular "Let's Try Dancing!" karaoke style. It was addicting... and transformative! Inspired by his new hobby, Miroku decides to turn his life around. He begins singing karaoke and going to the gym, where he meets Yoichi, the director of an entertainment company who encourages Miroku to pursue his dreams.

Miroku only wanted to be good at the game he loves, but when he accidentally uploads a clip of himself singing and dancing, it goes viral! Can he really become an idol, even at his age? Suddenly, it doesn't seem so impossible!

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THE CAT PROPOSED

Dento Hayane



LOVE-X-LOVE

Matoi Souta is an overworked office worker tired of his life. Then, on his way home from a long day of work one day, he decides to watch a traditional Japanese play. But something strange happens. He could have sworn he saw one of the actors has cat ears. It turns out that the man is actually a bakeneko — a shapeshifting cat from Japanese folklore. And then, the cat speaks: "From now on, you will be my mate."

TOKYOPOP

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NO VAMPIRE, NO HAPPY ENDING, VOLUME 1

Shinya Shinya



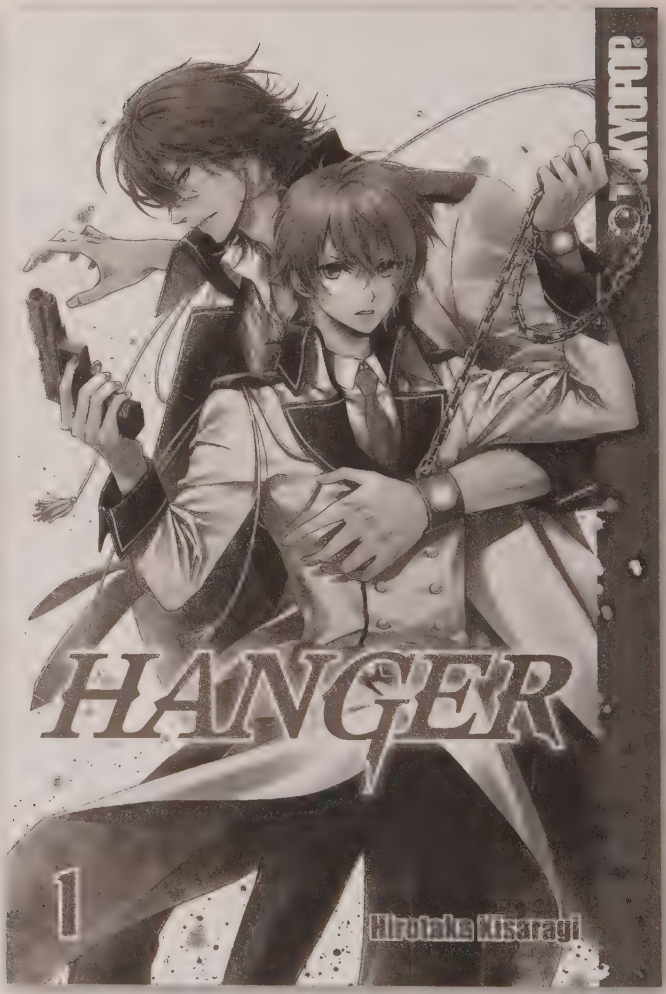
♀LOVE×LOVE♀

Arika is what you could charitably call a vampire "enthusiast." When she stumbles across the beautiful and mysterious vampire Divo however, her excitement quickly turns to disappointment as she discovers he's not exactly like the seductive, manipulative villains in her stories. His looks win first place, but his head's a space case. Armed with her extensive knowledge of vampire lore, Arika downgrades Divo to a beta vampire and begins their long, long... long journey to educate him in the ways of the undead.

© Shinya Shinya / MAG Garden

HANGER, VOLUME 1

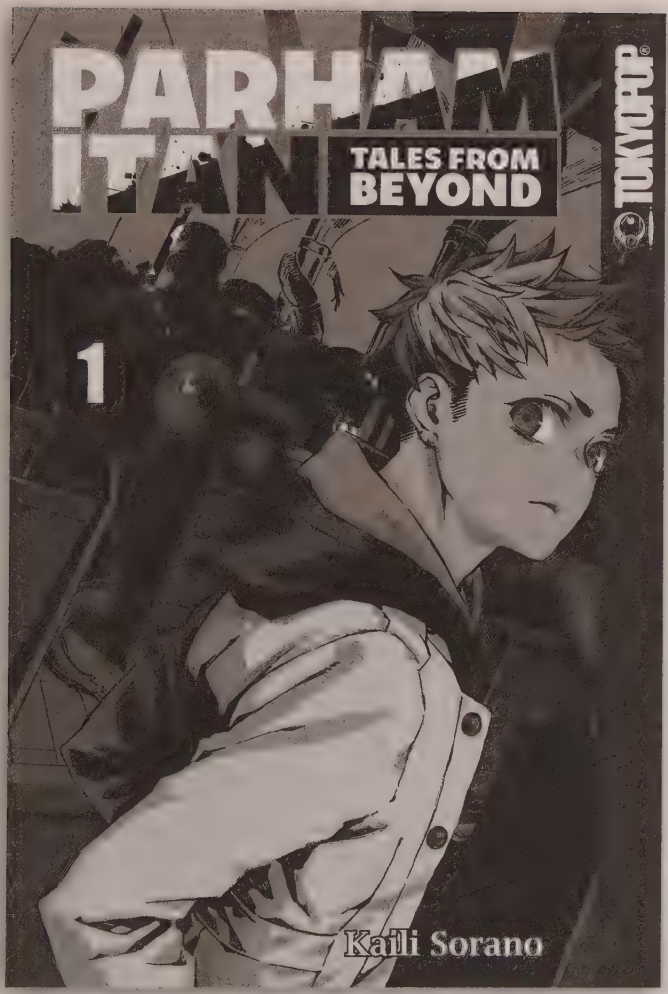
Hirotaka Kisaragi



LOVE-x-LOVE

In a futuristic Neo-Tokyo, crime is rising rapidly in the wake of a new generation of super-drugs capable of enhancing the user's physical and mental abilities. Hajime Tsukomo is a new recruit on a federal task force trained to go after these powered-up criminals. Now he must team up with Zeroichi, a so-called Hanger looking to reduce his own jail sentence in exchange for helping to take down these chemically-boosted bad guys. This is volume 1 of the series.

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PARHAM ITAN: TALES FROM BEYOND, VOLUME 1

Kaili Sorano

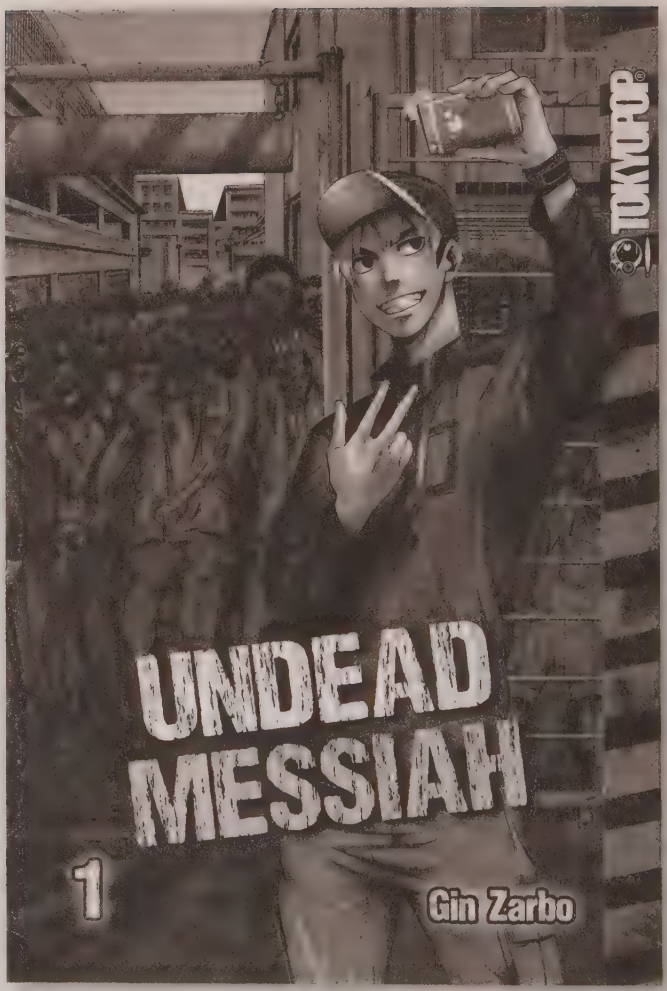
TOKYOPOP

Yamagishi and Sendo are schoolmates, but that's about all they have in common: one is a down-to-earth guy in the boxing club, while the other is a brainy, bookish conspiracy nut. But when they stumble across something weird and inexplicable after class one evening, it seems they'll have to set their differences aside in order to uncover the truth behind the mysterious creatures and strange figure prowling the school grounds.

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UNDEAD MESSIAH VOLUME 1 MANGA (ENGLISH)

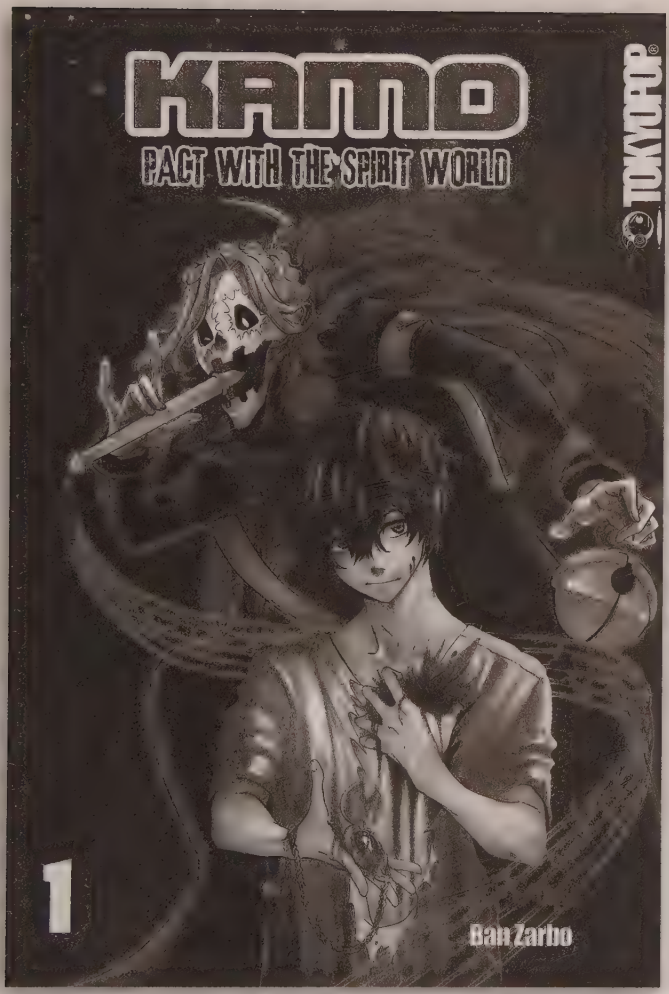
Gin Zarbo



INTERNATIONAL
BESTSELLER

A pregnant woman is pursued by a supernatural creature. On the internet, videos of a bandaged hero surface. 15-year-old Tim Muley makes a terrible discovery in his neighbor's garden. Three seemingly unrelated events, all of which seem to point to an imminent zombie apocalypse! But this time the story's not about the end of mankind; it's about a new beginning... This is volume 1 of the series.

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KAMO: PACT WITH THE SPIRIT WORLD VOLUME 1 MANGA (ENGLISH)

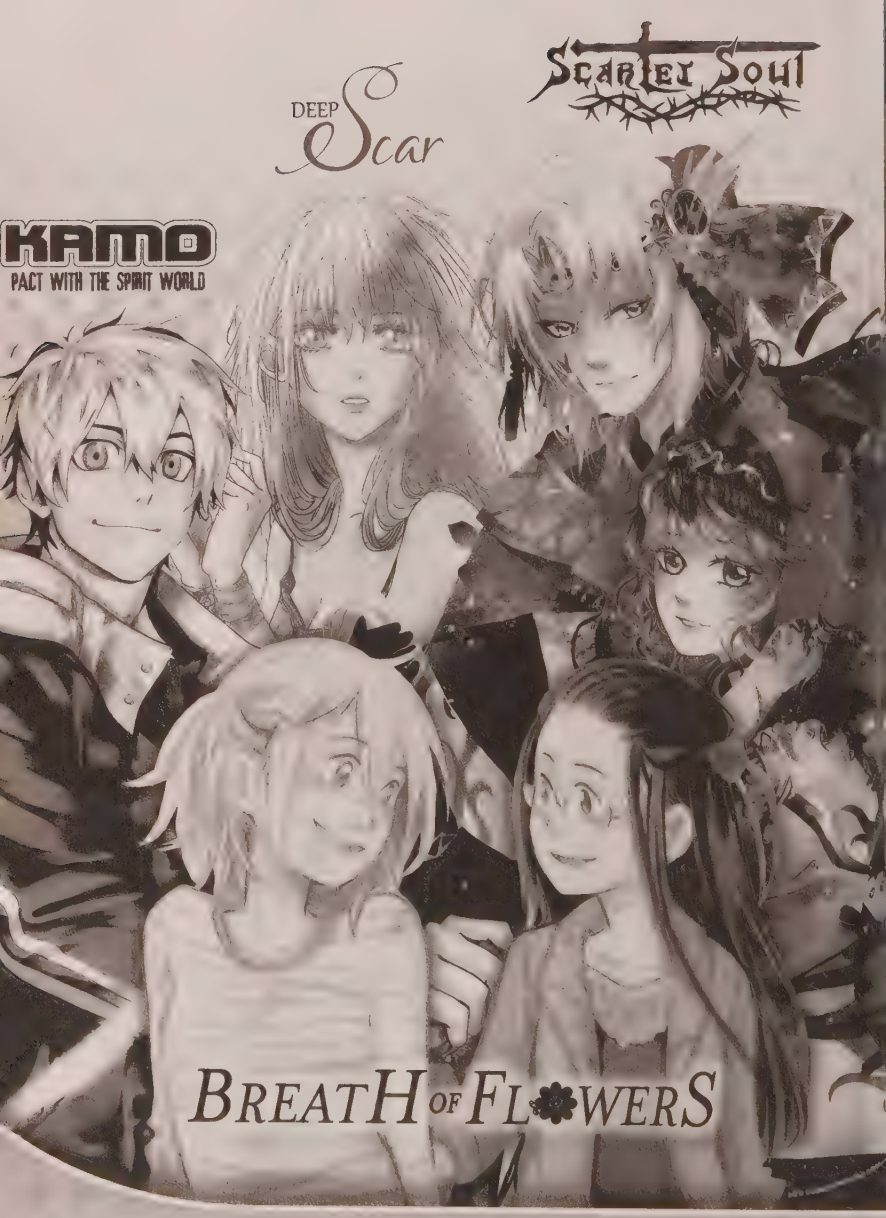
Ban Zarbo

INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN of MANGA

Born with a failing heart, Kamo has fought death his whole life, but to no avail. As his body weakens and he readies to draw his final breath, he's visited by a powerful spirit named Crimson who offers him a deal: defeat and capture the souls of twelve spirits in exchange for a new heart. It seems too good to be true... and maybe it is. A pact with the spirit world; what could possibly go wrong?

TOKYO POP

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN of MANGA



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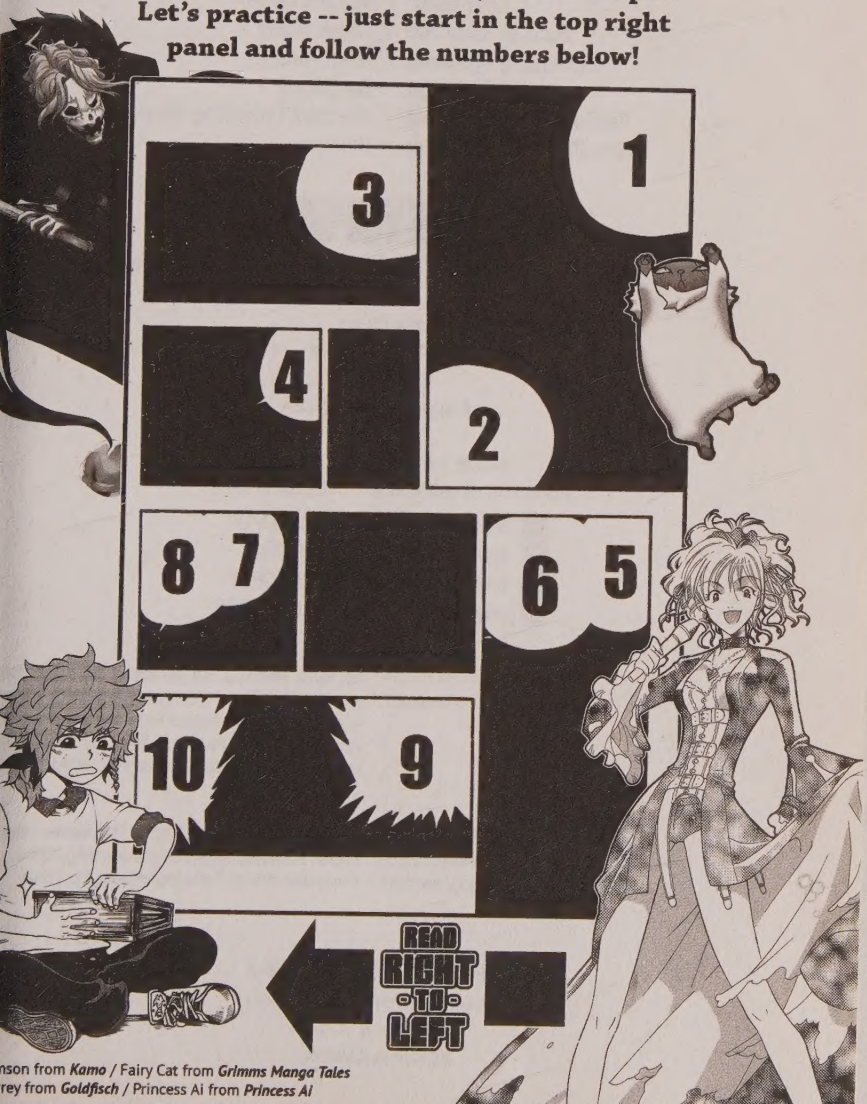
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LAUGHING UNDER THE CLOUDS

In the early Meiji era, against civil unrest and the end of the samurai way of life, Japan's crime rate skyrocketed. As prisons overflow, the government has no choice but to build a new, inescapable prison. This prison is Gokumonjo, located in the center of Lake Biwa, which means it relies on the three sons of the Kumo family to transport criminals to it. But is Gokumonjo truly just a prison for petty criminals...?

TOKYOPOP

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FANTASY VIOLENCE

FANTASY

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